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THE AUTONOMY OF ETHICS

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It has often been said—in fact, I have said it quite emphatically myself—that it is impossible to deduce ethical conclusions from non-ethical premisses. This now seems to me a mistake, and my aim here will be first to show that it is a mistake, and then to try and find out what truth it is that has been confused with this falsehood by so many people, myself included. In the first bit at least—my *retractatio*—and perhaps in the other bit too, I shall not be particularly original; but I shall put the points in my own way.

Some of the recent writers who have denied this alleged non-deducibility of ethical conclusions from non-ethical premisses have concentrated on the word “deduce”, and have suggested that it ought not to be confined narrowly to logical entailment, and in the wider sense which they propose one could speak, e.g., of deducing the goodness of the welfare state from the fact that people are happier in the welfare state than in a strict *laissez-faire* economy. In favour of this suggestion it has been urged, for example by Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument*, that this wider sense of “deduce” is much more like the sense it bears in ordinary speech. This does not seem to me a very important consideration; I have, all the same, some sympathy with the proposal to employ the term “deduce” in such an extended sense, if only because I find it very difficult to draw a clear and non-arbitrary line between the logical and the non-logical.

It is not, however, *this* doubt about the common maxim to which I wish to give voice here. The point on which I want to concentrate now is rather one which has been emphasised by such writers as David Rynin,¹ namely that, even in quite a narrow sense of “deduce”, it is possible to deduce ethical conclusions from non-ethical premisses. In the illustrations that follow I shall not in fact use any principles of deduction beyond those of ordinary propositional calculus and quantification theory.

¹ D. Rynin, “The Autonomy of Morals”, *Mind*, July, 1957.

Having thus disposed of "deduce", I had better say something now about "ethical" and "non-ethical". How shall we decide in a given case whether the conclusion we have deduced is an "ethical" one? Well, in the first place, it must obviously contain at least one of the characteristically ethical expressions. I mean it must have in it some word or words like "good", "bad", "right", "wrong", "ought", and so on, or some turn of speech in which these are implicit, like "desirable" for what "ought" to be desired (I shall in fact confine my examples to cases in which words like "ought" occur directly and explicitly). But while this is a *necessary* condition for a statement's being an ethical one, I don't think anyone would accept it as a *sufficient* condition. It is also necessary, for example, that at least one of the ethical expressions which are present should occur "essentially", i.e., should not be just replaceable by any expression whatsoever (of the appropriate grammatical type) without change of truth-value. For example, "It either is or is not the case that I ought to fight for my country" is not an ethical statement, since the truth-value of the whole would be unaltered if the ethical phrase "ought to" were replaced by "frequently do" or "am believed by my neighbours to", or if the whole clause "I ought to fight for my country" were replaced by "two and two are five" or "bread is sixpence a loaf".

I would go further than this too. (It will be appreciated that in piling on these conditions I am making my own job of deducing ethical conclusions a harder one.) I would not count as "ethical" a statement in which *only* ethical and logical expressions occurred essentially. For example, I should not regard any of the following as ethical statements:—

It is obligatory that what is obligatory be done.

If anything is obligatory it is permissible.

It is forbidden to do anything that is incompatible with what is obligatory.

I would say that statements of this sort belong to the *logic* of ethics, or "deontic logic" as it is sometimes called, but not to ethics itself. In genuinely ethical statements like "Tea-drinking is wrong" there must be a non-vacuous mention of something, like tea-drinking in this example, which is *brought into relation* to ethical concepts.

Even these conditions are not quite stringent enough; for they would let through, for example, "Tea-drinking is common in England, and if anything is obligatory that thing is permissible". Here the expressions "tea-drinking", "obligatory" and "permissible" all occur essentially, but the statement as a whole is not an

ethical one but a mere conjunction of an empirical statement with one from deontic logic. I would in fact accept the principle that no truth-function with non-ethical arguments only can be counted as being ethical as a whole.

Finally, in case my conditions are not stringent enough, I shall with all my examples proceed as follows: Wherever I claim that a certain statement is an ethical conclusion, and give a deduction of it from purely non-ethical premisses, I shall also give a deduction of the same conclusion from premisses which are *not* all non-ethical, and the deduction will be of a sort generally recognised as leading to an ethical conclusion. That is, to anyone tempted to query the "ethical" status of my conclusion, I shall say "Look, you can also get it *this* way; and if that was where you had first met with it, you wouldn't have dreamed of denying its 'ethical' character".

Any doubts as to where "ethical" statements end will of course *ipso facto* be doubts as to where non-ethical ones begin, but it is at least clear that if any one of the above conditions for a statement's belonging to Ethics is not met, then that statement must be non-ethical, and all but the last of the examples of "non-ethical premisses" which I propose to use will not meet even the first condition of being counted ethical, i.e., they will not explicitly or implicitly contain any of the distinctively ethical expressions "good", "ought", etc. (The one exception at the end is an inference which will have a premiss from deontic logic.) I shall also exclude *self-contradictory* premisses and sets of premisses, from which one could deduce not only ethical conclusions but any conclusions whatever, trivially. (This amounts to re-stating the common maxim as "Ethical conclusions never follow from *consistent* premisses all of which are non-ethical", but I don't imagine anyone will object to this.)

The way is now sufficiently prepared for my first demonstration of an ethical conclusion from a non-ethical premiss, namely this: "Tea-drinking is common in England; therefore either tea-drinking is common in England or all New Zealanders ought to be shot". There is nothing peculiar about this deduction as a deduction; it has the form "P; therefore either P or Q". The premiss is certainly non-ethical, and the conclusion ethical. If you are tempted to wonder whether this *is* an ethical conclusion, see how it looks when deduced in the following manner:—

Anyone who does what is not common in England ought to be shot;

All New Zealanders drink tea;

Therefore either tea-drinking is common in England or all New Zealanders ought to be shot.

No doubt what the conclusion expresses is not a simple duty but a duty with a proviso, but much ethical information has this form.

With regard to disjunctions of ethical and non-ethical statements, the "autonomists" are in fact in the following dilemma: Either such statements are as a whole ethical or they are not. If they are, we may deduce ethical from non-ethical propositions as above. And if they are not, we may deduce ethical from non-ethical propositions by using the form "Either P or Q, but not P, therefore Q": e.g. either grass is blue or smoking is wrong (now counted as non-ethical), but grass is not blue, therefore smoking is wrong.

Here is another case; and this time I'll put the unimpeachable deduction (from partly ethical premisses) first: "There is no one who is allowed to sit in a chair which will not bear his weight, and no ordinary chair will bear the weight of a man over 20 feet high; therefore there is no man over 20 feet high who is allowed to sit in an ordinary chair". Certainly some ethical information, about what is allowed and what not, is conveyed by the conclusion of this inference; and why shouldn't it be, considering how we got it? But we could equally have got it thus: "There is no man over 20 feet high; therefore there is no man over 20 feet high who is allowed to sit in an ordinary chair". And here the sole premiss is non-ethical.

These inferences are of course non-syllogistic, and Dr. T. H. Mott, who first pointed out to me² the possibility of using "P, therefore P or Q" to disprove the common maxim, observed at the same time that it does hold where syllogistic inferences are concerned. It must obviously do so if the premisses are "non-ethical" in the sense of not containing ethical expressions, for the conclusion of a syllogism cannot contain any expression (beyond purely logical constants in the narrowest sense) that does not occur in at least one of its premisses. It is worth adding, though, that the converse maxim, that non-ethical conclusions cannot be deduced from premisses all of which are ethical, does not hold even for syllogistic inferences. Consider, for example, "One should always wear a coat on a rainy day, but there's no need to wear a coat today, therefore it's not raining today", i.e., "All rainy days are days on which one ought to wear a coat, today is not a day on which, etc., therefore today is not a rainy day".³

² In a letter of February 9, 1954.

³ Cf. P. T. Geach, "Imperative and Deontic Logic", *Analysis*, January, 1958, and C. D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, pp. 487-491.

Further, although one cannot syllogistically deduce an ethical conclusion from a non-ethical premiss, one can do so by forms of inference which are very close to syllogisms. For example, since the two premisses "All Church officers ought to be reverent" and "Undertakers are Church officers" jointly imply that undertakers ought to be reverent, the single ethical premiss "All Church officers ought to be reverent" implies that *if* undertakers are Church officers they ought to be reverent, and the single *non*-ethical premiss "Undertakers are Church officers" implies that *if* all Church officers ought to be reverent undertakers ought to be. In fact this non-ethical premiss "Undertakers are Church officers" implies that *whatever* all Church officers ought to do, undertakers ought to do. This conclusion is comparatively complex, but its complexity is not of such a kind as to deprive it of all ethical content, as should be plain when we see it deduced not as above but as follows: All who have to do with the dead, whether they are themselves Church officers or not, ought to do whatever all Church officers ought to do; undertakers have to do with the dead; therefore undertakers ought to do whatever all Church officers ought to do (e.g. if all Church officers ought to be reverent, undertakers ought to be reverent).

In view of such examples as these, it is hard to see how anyone can any longer maintain that ethical conclusions are never formally deducible from premisses all of which are non-ethical. It must be admitted, however, that there is *something* peculiar about each of the examples I have given, though it is not easy to pick out a single oddity that attaches to them all, and when picked out not easy to see it as having any very profound significance.

In the first two cases one obvious peculiarity is that the premisses suffice to prove not only that a certain thing *ought* to be done but also that that very thing *is* done, so that the duty established is not one that we need ever be practically anxious about. Thus from the non-existence of men over 20 feet high we inferred in effect that no men over 20 feet high ought to sit on ordinary chairs; but it equally follows from this premiss that no men over 20 feet high *do* sit on ordinary chairs. Similarly, from the fact that tea-drinking is common in England it follows not only that either tea-drinking is common in England or New Zealanders ought to be shot, i.e., that New Zealanders ought to be shot-if-tea-drinking-is-not-common-in-England, but also that either tea-drinking is common in England or New Zealanders *are* shot, i.e., that New Zealanders *are* shot-if-tea-drinking-is-not-common-in-England (in view of the premiss, this is of course a very harmless sort of shooting). And this peculiarity is absent from the parallel

cases in which the same conclusion is drawn from mixed premisses; i.e., in the parallel cases the obligation established is one which *could*, consistently with the given premisses, fail to be discharged. Thus, given that whoever does what is not common in England ought to be shot, and that New Zealanders drink tea, while it does follow that New Zealanders ought to be shot if tea-drinking is not common in England, it does *not* follow that they *are* shot if tea-drinking is not common in England. Similarly with the man-over-20-feet-high example.

Moreover, it is clear that in the first two examples the moral expressions which occur in the conclusions have what we might call a *contingent vacuousness*. If a conclusion containing an expression E is validly inferred from a certain premiss or set of premisses, and the inference would remain valid if E were replaced by any expression whatever of the same grammatical type, then I say that in that inference the expression E is contingently vacuous. The expression "ought to" is in this sense contingently vacuous in the inferences "Tea-drinking is common in England, therefore either tea-drinking is common in England or all New Zealanders ought to be shot" and "No men are over 20 feet high, therefore no men over 20 feet high ought to sit in an ordinary chair", since the validity of neither of them would be affected if we replaced "ought to" by "think they are going to", for example. And it is very tempting to say that any "ought" that is deduced by ordinary modes of inference from a pure "is" *must* be contingently vacuous in this sense. For since there is no "ought" in the premisses, it would seem that no "ought" can possibly get into the conclusion except by processes which would bring anything at all into the conclusion in the same position.

My third example shows, however, that this last conjecture, for all its plausibility, is mistaken. For if we consider the inference

Undertakers are Church officers,

Therefore undertakers ought to do-whatever-all-Church-officers-ought-to-do,

the first and principal "ought to", i.e. the one which expresses the duty of undertakers, is *not* contingently vacuous in the above sense. It will not do, for example, simply to omit it, for it does not follow from the given premiss that undertakers *do* whatever all Church officers ought to do, but only that they do whatever all Church officers *do*; similarly it does not follow that they *think they* do whatever all Church officers ought to do, but only that they think they do whatever all Church officers think they do. (That is, this last follows in the sense "For all F, if all Church officers

think they F, then undertakers think they F", though of course it does not follow in the sense "Undertakers think that for all F, if all Church officers think they F, they themselves F", for the premiss only states that undertakers are in fact Church officers, not that they know they are.)

In the above example, it is evident, the principal "ought" is only prevented from being contingently vacuous by the presence of a second "ought" in a subordinate clause; and it is also evident that the only duties that are not contingently vacuous and that may nevertheless be inferred from purely non-ethical premisses are ones whose statement does thus require the use of at least two "oughts" (or other distinctively ethical expressions). They are all, one would say, *parasitic* duties, presupposing other duties. They are in this way rather like many propositions of deontic logic, e.g., "We ought not to do anything incompatible with what we ought to do". They are not, however, propositions of deontic logic, since other expressions occur non-vacuously in them beside ethical and formal ones (in our example, the expressions "undertaker" and "Church officer"), and we must resist any suggestion that duties of this parasitic sort are not, as far as they go, perfectly genuine and significant duties, or that they are duties only in some special and abnormal sense. No one could seriously say this, for example, of the duties expressed in such precepts as that one *ought* not to promise to do what one *ought* not to do, or that one *ought* to be punished for doing what one *ought* not to do, or that one *ought* to spend some time, though not too much time, in finding out what one *ought* to do.⁴ Nor is it odd or unusual for the duties of one class of people to be parasitic upon the duties of another class of people, which may or may not include the former class as a sub-class. For example, it could be the duty of, say, magistrates to impose unpleasant experiences upon all those (including, it may be, magistrates) who have done what they ought not to do.

It is, indeed, difficult to see how any of the duties just mentioned, e.g., that of not promising to do what one ought not to do, could be deduced from purely non-ethical premisses; so perhaps those parasitic duties which are so deducible all fall into some sub-class of parasitic duties which do have something peculiar or empty about them. I have not, however, been able to identify any such sub-class. Moreover, if one includes propositions of deontic logic among non-ethical propositions, the impression that such principles as the above could not possibly

⁴ Cf. T. Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers*, II.iii.

follow from purely non-ethical premisses is erroneous. For example, the following valid deduction has for its sole premisses a proposition of deontic logic and a proposition with no ethical terms in it at all, while its conclusion expresses a duty of the kind we are considering:—

No one ought to do what invariably accompanies the doing of something wrong;

X.Y. invariably acts as he says he will act;

Therefore X.Y. ought never to say that he will do anything that he ought not to do.

(I am not saying that the deontic-logic premiss is *true*, only that it and the other premiss do formally imply the conclusion.)

It is true that in our example about undertakers a *sort* of contingent vacuousness attaches to the two “oughts” in the conclusion taken together, in that the inference (“Undertakers are Church officers, therefore undertakers ought to do whatever all Church officers ought to do”) will remain valid if *both* “oughts” are replaced at once, and by the same replacement; and it is evident that at least this sort of contingent vacuousness will be present in *any* inference of an ethical conclusion from non-ethical premisses. This, however, seems to me a very trivial sort of contingent vacuousness, since it does not even imply that the duties inferred are automatically discharged. Thus in the given case, as we noted earlier, it cannot be inferred from the premiss that undertakers in fact *do* whatever all Church officers ought to do; so the duty that one *can* infer is by no means something that they have no real choice about.

I am driven to admit, therefore, that one simply *can* derive conclusions which are “ethical” in a quite serious sense from premisses none of which have this character. The undertaker, for example, who learns that he is a Church officer, can learn as a logical consequence of this something about his duty that he did not know before. This something will indeed require supplementation by other things—I mean other things of an *ethical* sort—before the undertaker is in possession of a precise recipe for action or abstention from action at place P and time T; but in this it resembles much else that nevertheless constitutes, as far as it goes, significant information about what one ought to do.

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IMPERATIVES AND INDICATIVES (II)

By P. C. GIBBONS

So far I have been concerned mainly to make plausible my initial contention that imperatives are a species of indicatives. I wish now to proceed to two further questions. Firstly, to the question, what is the logic of imperatives? and secondly to the, as I see it, quite distinct question, what are the peculiarities of imperatives? What differentiates them from other indicatives? What is the peculiar use of a sentence that justifies our calling it imperative? These questions can in turn best be approached by asking certain others. Whenever an order has been given it is appropriate to ask any of the following questions: What is it that is to be done or not done? Who is to do it? Why is it to be done? What are the consequences of doing it? These are the questions, as it seems to me, that elicit the logic of the order; some of them at least Mr. Hare fails to ask. The remaining questions, no less important but of a quite different type, are as follows: On whose authority is it to be done? Who are you to give me orders? Who do you think you are to give me orders? They are not concerned with what the order is, or with what it implies, excludes, or is implied or excluded by, but they are the natural follow-ups to the question: Is that an order?

Taking the first set of questions first: the answer to the question, what is it that is to be done, is Hare's phrastic; his unanalysed neustic is the answer to the question whether or not it is to be done. But the question who is to do it Hare does not consider; the answer is usually so obvious that it is easy to overlook the question. In fact, however, an actual or suppressed vocative is one of the essential features of an imperative, and to overlook this fact is to miss a large part of the logic of imperatives. Working in a closed system of imperatives, Hare considers as the contradictories of an order only those other orders that countermand or revoke it. Once we allow for the fact that every order must be addressed to someone, it is easier to recognise that an order may be in the third (or even the first) person as well as in the second. Now it is clear that the fact that John will not lay the table is something that it is as much open to John to state as it is either to him who originally gave the command to John to lay the table, but now revokes it, or to him who intervenes thus to countermand it. The statements that I, you, he or John will *not* lay the table are all equally contradictories of the statements that

I, you, he or John *will* lay the table, so long as the pronouns "I", "you" and "he" are all used to refer to John. It is of course true that "I will not lay the table" can hardly be used as an order, but this goes only to destroy the closed system of commands, and not to show that it does not contradict the order. It has been said that the best way to show you understand an order is to obey it. Apart from putting an undue premium on docility, this seems to me just a mistake. It suggests that it is always intelligent to do what you are told; that not to obey a command shows stupidity. But there are some commands of which the best evidence of our having thoroughly understood them is that we deliberately *decline* to obey them. And this is very much to the point: the commanding tone of voice and the imperative form of sentence are expressly designed to secure a certain blind immediacy of response. It is not accidental that the imperative mood is antipathetic to explicitness of the sort we have considered; on the contrary, it is part and parcel of the authoritarian frame of mind. We are much the more likely to secure illumination on this subject, both from a logical and from an ethical point of view, if we take into account the recusant and the contumacious along with the compliant and the submissive. Logically, refusing to obey seems to me on a par, as a contradictory of an order, with revoking or countermanding it, and if such a refusal can only be indicative, and if the proposition to which an indicative is contradictory must itself be indicative, then so much the better for my argument that imperatives are indicative. Confirmation is to be found in the familiar nursery exchange: "Do this"; "I won't"; "You will", where the final "You will" has exactly the same function and, I maintain, sense, as would a reiteration of the original command. Should anyone wish to maintain that the "will" in this sentence is not in any case an ordinary future indicative but an expression of volition, determination or wilfulness, I can only reply by suggesting, as I have above, that the volitional "I will" is itself nothing but a dubious and emphatic use of the future indicative, one used in a situation in which we anticipate effort or struggle, very often though not always with internal difficulties.

For the rest, the logic of imperatives is no doubt much as Hare represents it to be, and that for the very good reason that it differs no whit from the traditional syllogistic, or at least from that in conjunction with the propositional calculus. In the handling of the former, incidentally, Hare shows a scrupulous regard for strictness that I for one find most refreshing at a time when informality in argument is held in high regard and the notion of enthymeme has fallen into general disrepute. The reason

why this logic should reveal such striking similarities to the traditional one, and so little in the way of novelty and peculiarity, is not, on my view, far to seek; it is the same logic. Hare, indeed, as good as admits as much; even on his view its only idiosyncrasy is its exclamatory component, its so-called neustic. His phrastic would presumably be the same for any logic. One has only to believe the so-called neustic to be a compound of ordinary logical copula with some extra-logical or apropositional element to be satisfied that any of the great variety of logics at present on offer might be reduced in a similar way. A possible exception is Prior's logic of interrogatives,¹ which is perhaps to be thought of as one not of propositions but of propositional functions, as was originally the suggestion of Lewis and Langford.² Logic, in short, is the logic of undocked phrastics, of copulated phrases, of propositions; and the search for new logics, and for the oddities and singularities that are to lend them distinction, is a futile one if not actually perverse.

There remains Hare's contention that only imperatives imply imperatives and that imperatives alone are implied by them. It should be clear that I would wish to contest this view; but equally clear that its falsity does not follow from my main thesis. Hare's rule (1) would be verbally unaffected: viz., *No indicative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premises which cannot be validly drawn from the indicatives among them alone*; though on the view that imperatives are indicatives, it would now fail to exclude indicative conclusions being drawn from wholly imperative premises. On the other hand, rule (2), which reads: *No imperative conclusion can validly be drawn from a set of premises which does not contain at least one imperative*,³ whilst on my view it would no longer exclude an imperative's following from premises all of which are indicative, does require, as I would not, that at least one of them be imperative as well.

That Hare's rules break down and that "ought" can be deduced from "is", and vice versa, it should, since the rules are universal, be easy enough to demonstrate by means of counter examples.⁴ Indeed, if every imperative is an indicative, then

¹ 'Erotetic Logic', *Philosophical Review*, 1955.

² *Symbolic Logic*, p. 332.

³ R. M. Hare: *The Language of Morals*, p. 28.

⁴ Precisely this demonstration has been attempted by P. T. Geach in an article published since an earlier version of the present paper was first presented to the Annual Conference of the Australasian Association of Philosophy in 1956. Geach thinks, as I do, that "the logic of proper imperatives is . . . fairly trivial. For every proper imperative, there is a future-tense statement whose 'coming true' is identical with the fulfilment of the imperative. This is the source of everything that can be said about the inferability, incompatibility, etc., of imperatives; their being imperatives does not affect these logical relations" (P. T. Geach: 'Imperative and Deontic Logic', *Analysis*, January, 1958).

every "ought" statement not only implies, but is itself, an "is" statement—I speak loosely here for the sake of brevity. Of course, the reverse hardly follows: that every "is" is an "ought", and hence implies other "oughts", though as a psychological hypothesis this view has more than a little plausibility: the view, that is, that every statement constitutes a demand upon reality, a "be thus and no otherwise". This suggestion has an obvious bearing on the theory of false and erroneous statements. It is also one that might prove relevant to the discussions of necessary propositions. Those who have been anxious for one reason or another to distinguish between necessity and constraint have not, so far as I know, contemplated the possibility that propositions supposedly necessary are merely propositions that we, in our society, are constrained to accept—propositions that it is *imperative* for us to accept. Such a view would be especially important for those who think of necessity as ultimately linguistic: it might lead on to a reconsideration of the social character of this supposed ultimate.

Be this as it may, we might in any case argue that the two statements "You will do what I say, if you don't wish to suffer" and "You don't wish to suffer" are both of them simple indicatives, whilst the evident implication of them: "You will do what I say", may well be imperative. However, since the example has only as much plausibility as the general thesis it illustrates, I do not propose to press the point, but instead to approach the question from another side, viz. from that of the second set of questions I asked, which focuses on the notion of authority. If we really wish for insight into the imperiousness of imperatives, and into the moral character of prescription, it is to these that we must turn.

The imperiousness of the officious

To the question "Why should I do this?" there is at least one sort of answer that is distinctive: the answer, "Because I say so", which would be quite inappropriate in any other context. It is this answer that prompts the further question: "Who are you to give me orders?". In reply, one may produce either a gun or a warrant. The logic of guns requires no elucidation: it is of the "or-else" kind, and typifies the power-relation. However, low as is the preceptual morality, it is a low view even of it that attempts to explain it away wholly in terms of threats and promises, of bribery and coercion. It is individualistic and rationalistic, exaggerating out of sight the relatively minor part played in our behaviour by calculations of personal advantage, and ignoring

because it cannot plausibly account for them the parts played in it by loyalty, respect, servility, love and submissiveness. One need not deny the existence of naked power, but one can deny that it is the only backing for orders.

The notion of a warrant turns on the notion of office. A warrant authorises the performance of particular actions and the giving of particular orders; office-holding authorises a whole range of actions and the giving of a whole range of orders. It is, however, a range. Such authorisation is, ordinarily, both permissive and restrictive.

The Proctor can give me no orders if I am not a member of his University; the military policeman none if I am a civilian; the ordinary policeman none if I am an M.P. and within the precincts of Parliament. Moreover, the sergeant cannot give orders to the major, or the civil servant to the Prime Minister. In the typical case one has the authority to give another orders when and only when one is his superior in the same institution, and then in virtue of one's position in it, not as an individual, in respect of its concerns, and not of what is called his private life. One has authority in virtue of one's office, but it is limited by the nature of that office both as regards the persons over whom one can exercise it and the tasks which one may enjoin it upon others to perform. It is social, hierarchical, institutional, functional and relative.

So far, so good: that you hold an office superior to mine in an institution of which I am a member, and that your order is one that your office authorises you to give to persons in my position, is, if true, a satisfactory enough answer to the question: "Who are *you* to give *me* orders?". What remains unanswered is the question: "What is this authority that you possess?" It is no answer to this question to refer to the terms of your appointment, since the question immediately recurs: and what was the authority for that? Divine right apart, the attempt to persevere indefinitely in the legal sort of answer can lead only to an infinite regress.⁵ In fact, as we are very well aware, office-holding often derives ultimately from relations of power; for instance, typically, from conquest. What is more interesting is that it does not always do so.

What is misleading about our approach so far is that it concentrates upon hierarchy: upon relations of sub- and superordination within an institution. What is prior to this is the notion of a division of labour: of an apportionment of tasks within a common work. Such an arrangement or *ordering* of tasks

⁵ Cf. I. G. Wilks: "A Note on Sovereignty", *Philosophical Quarterly*, October, 1955.

may be either equal or differential. If equal it does not require the institution of office; if differential it may. It is only if the distribution of tasks is itself made a separate task that the question of hierarchy arises, that the question of an order arises either in the sense of a differentiation of levels or of a giving of commands. The crucial thing about office or position is that it is, or provides for, the distribution of tasks. To order is to arrange; to give orders is to arrange. There is nothing essentially hierarchic about the notion of an order or pattern of tasks; there is, no doubt, about that of ordering or directing, of imposing a pattern upon the activities of others, but the latter notion is derivative from the former. The division of labour within a common enterprise is the function that orders perform; the sharing out of tasks, whether equally or differentially, is what constitutes direction. The fitness of an organiser consists in his ability to secure the aims of his organisation precisely by organising it. His authority derives from his fitness; his fitness, itself, however, is fitness to organise for those aims. Both his fitness and its aims, moreover, are clearly enough relative: relative precisely to that common enterprise in which with others he is engaged. The aims in question are nothing if not the requirements of the work, the demands of those who are caught up in it. Of course, others outside it may also require or demand things of it, but unless these demands arise from an interest common to them and to those who are engaged in it, then they are extrinsic to it, and have no authority in respect of it. It is in the common interest, the joint task, the shared way of life that authority has its ultimate source, in contradistinction to power, which is essentially external.

I have treated authority so far from the point of view of imperatives, with which indeed it has special connections, but it may be as well at this point to notice that while an order given without authority is absurd, an authority who gives no orders is not. On my view, "Do this", addressed by me to you when you won't, is false, but "That soldier over by the fence, fall into line at the double", addressed to a civilian, is neither true nor false, since it presupposes what is not true, viz. that the person addressed is the sort of person to whom such orders may appropriately be given. It is tempting to say, following Strawson, that the sentence is neither true nor false because it fails to refer to anyone. However, misdescribing someone is not the same as failing to refer to him; the person addressed here need be in no doubt that it is he who is in question. The apt response is not "Who are you talking to?" but "Who do you think you are talking to?" where the doubt is not about the reference but about the description. This description is in turn relevant neither to the question

whether an order has been given nor to the question what that order is but to the question whether that order is a proper one. What is necessarily false is not that the person addressed will do what he is ordered to do (which he may anyway do) but that if he does so it will be for the implied reason, that he is a soldier, which he is not. It will not be *as a soldier* that he does it, if he does it.

In giving orders we can, then, lack the authority to give them, but it is no failure in an authority if he never gives orders at all. Indeed, a man may still be an authority though he holds no position or title and hasn't an office to his name. He will in this case, of course, be an authority *on* something, the master of a subject, not of persons; but it is no mere pun that is involved here, and no mere academic prepossession that leads one to insist upon this sense as no distant relative but central and progenitive. The possession of skill or ability does not alone warrant the claim to be considered an authority; one must also be able to communicate one's knowledge, to instruct and to inform. The master-craftsman is and has no authority unless he is also successful with apprentices; if he cannot impart his skill to others, he may be an expert but he is not really a master. One must be both knowledgeable and informed in order to supply direction, have both know-how and knowledge-that if one is to instruct. But of course, one can be an authority, never utter an imperative, and yet still get things done. Orders range from those of which the only backing is power to those which are given with real authority, but outside this range altogether there exists, as we have seen, a whole set of other ways of getting things done, from the simple asking of a question through the flat indication of a job to be done to the mere supplying of information that suggests that there is something that needs doing.

My conclusions can be summarised as follows: Someone has authority in so far as he is recognised as especially fitted to contribute to the conduct of a joint enterprise the information required to organise it. A man has the role of an authority if it is especially fruitful to refer to or appeal to him, if we can expect him to contribute to and give direction to our pursuits. What is in the first place essential is that the enterprise be joint: I can recognise no one as an authority for me who is not engaged in an enterprise which also engages me. Authority derives from co-operation, i.e. from working together. It is the fact of a common enterprise, a joint undertaking, that gives authority its distinctive character as something not merely external and arbitrary but internal and necessary. Its necessity, of course, is conditional

upon my being engaged in this enterprise, though of course I may recognise someone as having authority within, say, the Communist Party without being a communist myself, or within an organisation which I have been compelled to join, yet still not acknowledge his authority, as distinct from his power, over *me*.

This authority must of course be exercised in the organisation of that enterprise. The tasks allotted, the roles assigned must all be relevant to that enterprise. Seeing just what these roles involve and how they must be ordered is itself one of these roles, the organisational one. Another role, particularly important in the political sphere, is recruitment; and essential to this is seeing just what the enterprise itself is. A leader's authority may just consist in his being acknowledged as especially able in bringing and keeping people together. What he must show us is that he knows what we want and behind this must lie the knowledge who "we" are. What I would maintain to be wrong about earlier accounts of imperatives is their individualist character: what precisely I think needs recognition is their social setting. It is the first person *plural* that is the key to the whole question. I am indeed inclined to propose as the basic form of what I shall call the authoritative syllogism something like the following:

You are one of us
We do so-and-so
You will do so-and-so.

Where a differential division of labour is concerned, of course, a determinant must be added to the "us"—it is as such a one of us that you are expected to perform this rather than that particular task. But it is in any case only as one of us, whoever we are, that you have a role to play at all. Imperatives do follow from indicatives, that is to say, viz. from first person plural indicatives coupled with attributions of class-membership of the "we" in question.

We may now return briefly to the questions of office and rank. We may observe first of all how authority derives from respect that is commanded from below, and is not merely conferred from above—in the first place, at least, though subsequently it may be delegated and divided. In the second place, it is to be noted that when an enterprise crystallises out as an institution or organisation, when it becomes official and hierarchical, it tends to buttress its structure of offices with a system of sanctions. Such a system is of the external sort proper to power-relations; and office does normally involve a complex in which power-relations play a greater or smaller part along with more or less

of genuine authority and fitness. Rarely if ever, in fact, do we get either authority or power in their pure forms, and office is, almost of its very nature (as a consolidation and fixing of authority, that is), a mixture of the two.

If this account is correct, it corroborates our previous analysis in at least two different ways. In the first place it brings out the fact that the directive role is an informative one, which is what corresponds at the social level to the grammatical contention that imperatives are indicative. At its broadest, it is a matter of stating who we are, what we want, how it can be got, what has to be done and who can do it; at its narrowest, of assigning particular jobs to particular people. In either case it is a matter of communicating information. In the second place this account exhibits the indicative form of the reasons for obeying an order. These may be either of the "or-else" kind, or of the "one-of-us" variety or of course a mixture of the two; and it is worthy noting this difference between them, that in the latter case, but not in the former, the reasons for giving and the reasons for obeying an order may be the same.

There are ethical implications of this account that it may be as well to note. The ethical relativist is naturally inclined to maintain that all imperatives are hypothetical or conditional; this contention I have specifically rejected, both in the form of the "or-else" analysis of imperatives and in the form of an exclusively "or-else" analysis of the backing for imperatives. But the view that there are categorical or unconditional imperatives does not commit one to the view that there are imperatives which are unconditionally or absolutely binding. "You will do this" may be true or false; the conditions under which I will do it may be either present or absent. To take the simplest case, it may either be that I am not "one of us" or that in fact we just don't do the sort of thing in question. Put in terms of "we" and "us" the whole question is, of course, thoroughly ambiguous; I cannot say either that I am not one of you, or that I am, but we don't do that, until I know who you are, and it very often suits you not to let me know. Of course, either one of the premises may be made analytic: "we" can be used to mean "those of us who do so and so". However, if it is, and I am not going to obey, then equally it becomes analytic either that we don't do so-and-so, at least not always, or else that I'm not one of you. To disobey is to weaken and perhaps to break an association. Continued disobedience is tantamount either to the rejection of the leader or the secession of the led, and the extreme sanction for disobedience is, correspondingly, not mere disfranchisement but expulsion—in

the case of whole societies, banishment, outlawry or death. Bullying apart, bluff and deceit play a large part in any system of dictation so that the issues will not ordinarily be made clear like this; but this is a fact about the dictatorial and not an objection to the analysis. The upshot is that at the heart of a system of commands lies a set of views as to what sort of persons the commanded are, and what such persons will do. It is not surprising that such theories are often mistaken or that they are made true by supplementing them with sanctions. We may note also that there exist second-order reasons for obedience; I may consider it more important to preserve a certain form of organisation than to disobey a particular order I consider to be mistaken.

What emerges then in the first place is that commands play their part and have relevance only in a context of varied and conflicting activities, movements and ways of life. There are an indefinitely large number of we-s of which in one way and another and from one time to another any one person may be a member. Your class, club, church, party and pals may or may not be mine, or some may be but not others—you may be one of us in one enterprise but not in another, at one time and in one mood but not another. I am complex by many inclusions and exclusions, and by a shifting pattern of these, constantly changing as I lose my job, my faith, my friends or my illusions. Of course, “we” may mean no more than “you and I”, but we do distinguish the purely nominal use of the pronoun from the case where we have something in common—where you and I have nothing in common, one of us may well ask: “What do you mean, we?”. Imperatives, then, have only limited and conditional application and validity: there is no universal “we” in any but a nominal sense, and in any given case the discovery that “we” do or require so-and-so may be a sufficient condition of my ceasing to be a member of that “we”. So far as this goes I doubt if my position differs in any important respect from Hare’s, except perhaps in insisting that “it isn’t done” and “it is the done thing” are simultaneously the typical prescriptive form and (with a “by us” made both explicit and specific) simple indications of social fact or falsehood. This may amount to little more than the contention that morals are a matter of custom; at least it has the consequence that if ethics is a matter of imperatives, it must take its place as just one segment of empirical sociology.

While we are still concerned with the moral aspect of imperatives it may be well to note that the imperative is itself a way of life, though only one amongst others. This has in fact already come out in our account of authority; but it is here that there

lies the answer to our other question: if imperatives are a kind of indicative, what kind are they? The answer, as we might have expected, is social, not logical: the imperative is one way of doing and getting things done. The interrogative and the imperative are both moods, in more senses than one: they represent quite distinct attitudes and activities. Imperatives, as we have seen, are not essential to the organisation of tasks: what distinguishes their use is that they minimise explanation and cover hesitation. The dictatorial and the authoritarian are at the other end of the scale from the inquisitive and the communicative; the typical giver of orders is also typically the one who resents question of any sort as prejudicial to discipline, and expects his commands to be obeyed simply as arbitrary fiat. The domineering attitude is in practice generally to be found in some sort of compromise with the co-operative, power in some sort of compromise with authority; indeed, on the view that at least a minimum of communication is essential to its operating at all, necessarily so. But the reverse does not hold, and it is the major oversight in Hare's book, so it seems to me, that he simply does not allow for the existence of a non-preceptual morality, of ways of life that are almost or completely independent of imperatives. Even were it to be argued that in practice there is an imperative element in any activity, organisation or way of life—which I am not really disposed to admit—it still remains of the first importance to recognise the non-imperative element as well. Of course, Hare is not alone in this, and it is not only philosophers but sociologists as well who confuse thus between moralism and mores; but it is an oversight, if it is indeed to be called such, that seems to me to make impossible any real understanding even of the imperative mode itself.

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CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

By JOHN E. LLEWELYN

What follows are some remarks on two chapters of Professor Nowell-Smith's *Ethics*¹: chapter 17, 'Conscientiousness', and, perforce, chapter 18, on 'Conscience'; for one of my contentions will be that Nowell-Smith discredits the claims of conscientious action to have most moral value or to be alone in having moral value (I shall refer to this claim as the C-thesis), but that he succeeds in this only because he takes conscientiousness to have more to do with a Kantian analysis of conscience than it in fact has.

The trouble begins on the first page of chapter 17, where it is stated that the chapter is to be an examination of the claim 'of the sense of duty to be the only morally good, or at least the best, motive'. Previously conscientious action has been defined as action motivated by the sense of duty.

'A man might have a direct pro-attitude towards doing what he thinks his duty, as such; he may have no desire whatever to do the action apart from its being his duty and no thought of the consequences, for himself or others, that the action is likely to produce. Now this motive is exactly what we mean by the Sense of Duty and the man who acts on it is called conscientious.'

As against this I shall try to establish that at any rate action from a sense of duty is not all that we call conscientious, but that we also call a man conscientious without giving it to be understood that any particular act of his is motivated by a sense of duty; nor, indeed, when the word is used in this way does it designate a *motive from* which an action is performed but a higher-order procedural policy *according to* which a man may or may not behave.

On p. 257, after a series of arguments aimed at discrediting the C-thesis, Nowell-Smith says:

'Since praising and condemning are things that we do, it is necessary that we should have some motive for doing them; and we should not conclude that a motive is a natural one if it is possible to account for it in some other way. Now it is tautological to say that every man has a pro-attitude towards other people doing good to him, since "doing good to" means "bringing about those things towards which he has a pro-attitude".'²

¹ P. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, Penguin Books, 1954.

² *Ethics*, pp. 249-250.

Whether or not this *is* tautological depends on who says that what is done to a person is good. Consider the case of John Newton sitting back in his cabin writing hymns while the slaves groaned in the hold below. Neither from the *statement* that John Newton's behaviour was morally reprehensible, nor from the *fact* that John Newton's behaviour was morally reprehensible, does it follow that John Newton was culpable for not deeming his behaviour morally reprehensible. On the contrary, quite apart from the question whether slave-trading at that time was justifiable on economic or other utilitarian grounds, if to deem something reprehensible is the same as to condemn it and so is to *do* something, e.g., here to *say* something, then John Newton *would* have been culpable if he *had* deemed his behaviour morally reprehensible, *provided that in behaving the way he did he was conscientious*.

But I can go no further now without explaining what I take to be meant when we say that someone is conscientious. I do not challenge Nowell-Smith's point that we might call an action performed from the sense of duty conscientious. Nor do I deny that we might call a person who acts from the sense of duty *ipso facto* conscientious. But I do deny that Nowell-Smith has given an adequate diagnosis of what we count to be *action* done from a sense of duty; and I think that we mean more in calling a *person* conscientious than that he acts from a sense of duty.

Under 'conscientious' the Concise Oxford Dictionary gives 'obedient to conscience, scrupulous'. Nowell-Smith pays too scant attention to the second part of this definition. When the form-master writes on a boy's school-report 'Freddy is not a genius but he is a conscientious worker' he is not implying merely that Freddy always hands in his Latin unseen on Monday morning as the Classics master prescribes, but that Freddy is painstaking, takes his work seriously, does his best and never, or rarely, says die.

Likewise for any case of moral assessment. A conscientious act is not merely one that it is our duty to do, nor merely one that is done out of a sense of duty; but one that is done by a person who takes his duty seriously, takes pains to find out just what his duty is and never neglects to take into account advice and other factors that might require him to revise his criteria of what is right and wrong. So if John Newton's action or lack of it in sitting up in his cabin writing his hymns is taken to indicate an indifference to the groans of the slaves in the ship's hold, then his conduct would not be that of a conscientious person and we would be justified in condemning him. We would not be justified, how-

ever, if John Newton's diary satisfied us that he had done quite a deal of soul-searching and was still concerned to test the grounds of his opinions at that time about the morality of slave-trading; and that he was ready to modify these opinions if he came to feel they were ill-grounded. Just how much concern and active questioning can be expected of a man can be decided only for each situation; but conscientiousness implies at least *some* willingness to correct one's criteria. I repeat, however, that, given such painstaking, John Newton would have been culpable if he had professed that his toleration of slave-trading was wrong. His case would be analogous to that of someone who saw that the evidence gave strongest grounds for concluding that X but who maintained that not X. This is to be irrational. And to be conscientious is to be rational, i.e. to adopt those means which according to our intelligence seem best suited to achieve the end we happen to have in view. But if there were no more to being conscientious than just being rational it would not make people raise their eyebrows to say that Sweeney Todd was a conscientious fellow; whereas to say this would make people raise their eyebrows. The most we have a right to say is that Sweeney Todd was a conscientiously wicked fellow; i.e. unscrupulous in the executing of his designs. To say that someone is conscientious without qualification implies that as well as being *rational* in the sense defined, he is also *reasonable*, i.e. assiduous in the collection of and attention to evidence that might confirm or cast doubt on the tenability of his current criteria of moral conduct.

I use the word 'criteria' with trepidation because to some extent I find inadequate the model which suggests that in deciding what is my duty I plump for that line of action which I see would be an instance of obeying a certain general prescription. True, some acts are justified only if a syllogistic parade-drill can be carried out; and, adopting this model, one might conceive of conscientiousness as a presupposition of the moral act, standing to it as a rule of inference stands to a conclusion derived according to that rule. The rule that one should be conscientious, i.e. that one should be assiduous in the collection of and attention to evidence that might confirm or cast doubt on the tenability of one's current criteria of moral conduct, cannot be treated as a premiss in the argument without involving the fallacy about which the tortoise taught us.³ *A fortiori* it cannot be treated as a major premiss or, as Nowell-Smith assumes it can,⁴ as a *motive from*

³ It will be recalled that in *Mind* 1895 Lewis Carroll's tortoise explained to Achilles that an infinite regress is generated when the principle of an inference is treated as a premiss.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 245.

which one acts. So I disagree with his description of conscientiousness as 'a disposition to obey certain rules' if by 'rules' he means rules that might stand as major premisses in practical syllogisms.⁵

But to say that conscientiousness is acting in accordance with a rule which is analogous to a rule of inference is still giving too much prominence to the deductive model. To invoke the analogy of canons of induction is to get closer to the mark; but this is still wide of the mark if by 'induction' is meant some kind of process of inference. For, to adapt a Rylean comparison, learning our duty is like learning to find our way about a town.

What makes these analogies inadequate is the consideration, not ignored by Nowell-Smith, that there are occasions when we think a man a better man for his having refused to do what he took it to be his duty to do and having chosen to follow instead the promptings of his heart. But I disagree that conscientiousness is, as Nowell-Smith thinks, incompatible with following these promptings. For it would be the opposite of conscientiousness for one to ignore the claims of such promptings to merit consideration as factors indicative of our duty. Such promptings are not all in the class of Robespierre's taste for roses and sentimental verse. Nowell-Smith declares that he 'would have no hesitation in saying that Robespierre would have been a better man (quite apart from the question of the harm he did) if he had given his conscience a thorough rest and indulged his taste for roses and sentimental verse'.⁶ My comment on this is that though we might in some sense have *thought better of him*, thought him a nicer chap to know, we would not, in all seriousness, have thought him a morally better man—unless we took the appeal of his taste for roses and sentimental verse to be the voice of his better self, i.e. the 'Voice of Conscience'. Avowedly, Robespierre's taste in these matters is an intractable candidate for such a rôle,⁷ but Nowell-Smith is loading the scales in his favour in taking the Commanding Voice of Duty picture as a fair image of and the only one appropriate to give significance to the notion of 'conscience'. The conscientious man invokes conscience when he wishes to disclaim the capacity to *justify* an action and yet reserve the right to deny that the action was unconsidered. For the conscientious man has to leave open the possibility that there are situations

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁷ A more suitable casting for this rôle is furnished by the case of the Oxford don who had no taste for Common Room life, but who tried to participate in it because he felt it his duty to do so, even though his colleagues were embarrassed by his presence. *Loc. cit.*

where the reasons of the head give way to the reasons of the heart, and that these latter are often the data on which we go in modifying principles of conduct so far explicitly accepted. Conscientiousness has to do with *l'esprit de finesse* no less than with *l'esprit géométrique*, with creative adult behaviour no less than with a child's unimaginative abiding by the precepts taught him by his parents.

My main point is, in brief, that Nowell-Smith is mistaken in equating conscientiousness and conscientious action with the sense of duty and action done from a sense of duty. Although I do not deny that where we would say of an act that it was performed from a sense of duty we should also be willing to describe it as conscientious, I do deny that the converse holds. 'Conscientious' is not simply the adjective cognate with the noun-phrase 'sense of duty', as Nowell-Smith implies when he writes: 'Now this motive is exactly what we mean by the Sense of Duty and the man who acts on it is called conscientious'.⁸

I claimed above that 'conscientious' is more closely related to 'reasonable' than it is to 'rational'. 'Done from a sense of duty', on the other hand, has a closer kinship with 'rational' than with 'reasonable'. 'Rational', I submit, is most at home when used of thinking or doing in which rules are being applied and applied pretty strictly—as in deductive inference, arithmetical calculation and the calculation of means to adopted ends. When conduct is said to be reasonable, by contrast, the implication is that whatever principles govern it work with a high degree of flexibility; their warp and woof is coarse. Indeed there may be no principles at work at all until some have been selected or invented, and when this is the case, in calling the person who selected or invented them reasonable we may mean that he showed good judgement and made a wise choice. This brings out another feature which 'conscientious' and 'reasonable' have in common: they both lend themselves to morally evaluative uses more readily than do 'rational' and 'from a sense of duty'. And this leads me to my final remarks.

If we are speaking of an action and say that it is conscientious, nothing or little more is said than if we had said it was performed from a sense of duty. And if we wish to single out a motive by calling it conscientious, we would have singled out the same one, I fancy, if we had used instead of phrase 'sense of duty'. I confess that I am not very happy about allowing that it does make sense to speak of a particular action as conscientious⁹

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁹ We say, rather, adverbially, that an action or duty was carried out conscientiously.

and, as I disclosed earlier, I am very unhappy about speaking of conscientiousness as a motive. Nowell-Smith appears contented to accept both locutions,¹⁰ though more frequently he uses the adjective to ascribe a disposition to a person,¹¹ and this I take to be its primary use. Yet I cannot agree that conscientiousness is merely 'the disposition to obey certain rules'.¹² When we say that a man is conscientious we are not wishing simply to draw attention to his administrative assiduity. Our intention is also to indicate and usually commend his judgement, honesty and seriousness as a legislator, to record our belief that he endeavours to ensure that the principles he subscribes to are the ones he ought to subscribe to. It is correct to say that 'the sense of duty is the desire to do whatever is laid down by the moral rules we have adopted'; 'done from a sense of duty' does carry with it the technological connotation of 'rational'. But although 'conscientious' may also bear this meaning if used of a single act, when it is used, as Nowell-Smith uses it, to refer to a person and his character, the implications are far wider. Then the term takes in not only the phase of behaviour in which a person executes or refuses to execute actions in accordance with pre-existing rules: it takes in also that phase of thinking and experiment in which a person tries to ensure that the rules he adopts are the best he could adopt; and this future aspect is ignored by Nowell-Smith's statement that 'the sense of duty is the desire to do whatever is laid down by the moral rules we *have adopted*'. The phrase 'disposition to do his duty' would convey this implication if 'duty' were understood in the special sense of those philosophers who used to speak of a duty to try to discover one's duty. In that sense, however, 'duty' signifies a higher order concept than the only one that Nowell-Smith makes use of.

Now even if it is conceded that the evidence of everyday language supports my diagnosis that Nowell-Smith has lost track of ordinary parlance (having perhaps been led astray by the false scent of a favourite interpretation of Kantian ethics), it may be asked 'So what?'.

My reply is that where ordinary language is presupposed as the framework of philosophical argument, as must be the case especially of arguments in moral philosophy, there is a *prima facie* justification for accepting validly inferred conclusions; but once terms of philosophical usage are admitted into the arguments then this *prima facie* justification is no longer available. It is then

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 251 ff. and p. 258.

¹¹ Cf., for example, the sentence from p. 245 quoted above.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

incumbent on the philosopher to expose, explain and vindicate this technical usage. Otherwise inferences which appear to be vouched for by the standards of ordinary discourse will in fact, since they turn on a covert ambiguity, not be thus vouched for. The collector will find specimens of such misleading arguments in writings as early as the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, to conclude, is a specimen from the book on which I have been commenting in this article:

'Now to be conscientious is not to conform to an accepted moral code, but to conform to rules to which the agent himself thinks he ought to conform. But although it is possible for some individuals to adopt rules that conflict with the accepted code, it is logically necessary that such cases should be rare. There could be no such thing as an accepted code if most people did not accept it. *It follows therefore* that, although there may be exceptions, in the majority of cases a conscientious man will do those things that are laid down in the accepted code more often than a non-conscientious man will; and since the code consists of rules which are believed to promote the interests of society, it follows that a conscientious man must be more likely to do what is believed to be in the interests of society than a non-conscientious man.'¹³

A recognition that the term 'conscientious' is here being used only as a devalued philosophical coinage reveals that the italicised phrase has no right in the argument once this argument is converted into the currency of non-philosophical English. For why shouldn't, say, the hedonists or egoists or the more unthinking citizens in the community, and not the conscientious folk, supply the minimum of conformity to the social code that is said to be logically necessary?

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¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 257. My italics.

A NEW WAY WITH THE FIVE WAYS

By W. E. KENNICK

Philo: Since the time of Hume and Kant philosophers generally have come to look upon proofs for the existence of God with considerable suspicion. Almost no philosopher nowadays—and this includes the Thomists—believes that a sound, as opposed to merely formally valid, *a priori* proof for the existence of God is possible, and, although some philosophers still doggedly insist on the soundness of those *a posteriori* arguments epitomized in St. Thomas Aquinas's 'Five Ways', many, if not most, philosophers believe them to be either invalid or inconclusive, failures as proofs. Now suppose these philosophers are right. Suppose we must give up all proofs for the existence of God as a bad job. Must not the theologian abandon natural theology as an impossibility?

*Theo:*¹ I think not. The theologians, naturally, have been more reluctant than the philosophers to abandon the proofs as a bad job, but today many theologians, particularly—but by no means only—Protestant theologians, have come to admit that, as proofs, the proofs for the existence of God will not do. Some, like the Barthians, reject the proofs, not because they are logically unsound, but because they are theologically unsound; the proofs sinfully treat God as an object to be investigated and thought about rather than as a Subject to be addressed. The Barthians, of course, reject—or attempt to reject, for I think they are unsuccessful in this²—all natural theology; they rely instead upon the preaching of 'biblical theology' and upon appeals to a direct 'encounter' with God. But there are other theologians who, unwilling to surrender natural theology so quickly and easily, take a more sophisticated line on the Five Ways than that usually taken. They admit that, as *proofs*, the Five Ways will not do. They may agree with Dr. Farrer that the proofs are formal paralogsms because they are analogical syllogisms and "all analogical syllogisms have *quaternio terminorum* and are invalid".³

¹ The position of 'Theo' in this dialogue is meant to represent the position on the Five Ways of a group of English theologians, representative of whom are Dr. Austin Farrer in his book *Finite and Infinite* (London, 1943) and Dr. E. L. Mascall in his books *He Who Is* (London, 1943), *Existence and Analogy* (London, 1949), and *Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse* (London, 1957). I have relied most heavily on Dr. Mascall's statement of the position.

² Cf. *Finite and Infinite*, pp. 2-3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

Or they may agree with Dr. Mascall that although "the premises 'If anything exists, God exists' and 'Something does exist' logically imply the conclusion 'Therefore God exists' by the simple application of the mood *ponendo ponens* of the hypothetical syllogism", nevertheless those who wish to treat this as a sound proof encounter the difficulty of proving the truth of the major premise "without already begging the conclusion, and I for one cannot see how this can be done".⁴

But they do not, for all this, reject the proofs as useless. After all, one is not forced to accept a series of statements which looks like a proof as either expressing a sound and cogent argument or else as constituting a meaningless fabric of confusions. What looks like a proof may have another job to do than that of formally demonstrating a conclusion.

Philo: I agree that one can make non-argumentative uses of proofs and arguments. But one must be very careful about what non-argumentative use he makes of an argument which he admits is unsound, for there will naturally be a tendency both on the part of those who use the argument in this way and on the part of those to whom the 'argument' is addressed still to take it as a *bona fide* argument. So the question is, What use do the theologians in question make of the Five Ways, and will the use they make of them support so ambitious an enterprise as natural theology?

Theo: Mascall puts it this way:

"Although in its structure each of St. Thomas's Five Ways has the form of a hypothetical constructive syllogism, the heart of the argument is found not in the recognition that the conclusion follows from the premises but in the recognition that the major premise is true."⁵

"The ultimate function of the Five Ways is to make it plain, by calling attention to five outstanding features of finite being, what the fundamental characteristic of finite being is. And that fundamental characteristic is a radical inability to account for its own existence."⁶

"In the last resort St. Thomas has only one datum for an argument for the existence of God, namely the existence of beings whose existence is not necessitated by their essence; that is, beings in which essence and existence are really distinct. The Five Ways are not so much syllogistic *proofs* that finite being is of this type

⁴ *Words and Images*, p. 84.

⁵ *Existence and Analogy*, p. 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

as *discussions* of finite being which may help us to apprehend that it is."⁷

Consider an example. The third of St. Thomas's Five Ways says in effect, 'If contingent beings exist, then there must exist a Necessary Being; but contingent beings do exist; therefore, there exists a Necessary Being, and this all men speak of as God'. Now no one wants to deny the minor premise; no one but a fool, that is, would care to deny that there are beings which come into existence and pass away. The trouble obviously lies in the major premise. On what grounds can we assert that the existence of contingent beings involves the existence of God? "Not, surely, by a mere logical play upon the words 'necessary' and 'contingent', but by an intimate metaphysical grasp of what contingency, as our experience reveals it to us, really is."⁸ The proofs are thus basically devices for getting us to "see", "grasp", "apprehend" finite beings for what they really are.

Philo: I am still not clear about just what the proofs are supposed to do. Mascall realises that the proofs, as he states them, are formally valid. He also realises that the difficulty with them lies in the major premise. But now instead of trying to *show* that the major premise is true, something he thinks cannot be done without begging the question, he says that the arguments stimulate us simply to *see* that their own major premises are true. But I do not see what good this does. For the major premise, as Mascall states it, is simply a hypothetical statement: 'If . . . , then God exists.' Now suppose I am stimulated to 'see' that this is so. Nothing whatever follows until I affirm the minor premise, in which case we are back with the proof *as a proof*, and the traditional objections to it can now be brought into play. We may have avoided begging the question, but we have not avoided inference, and inference is what I thought Mascall was trying to avoid.

Nor am I sure that he has really avoided begging the question. For suppose the argument stimulates (causes) me to 'see' that the major premise is true. How can I tell that I have 'seen' what is the case? He must surely allow the possibility that I might be mistaken, that I might think I 'see' what is in fact not the case at all. But if he allows this, then he must provide some independent test for the correctness of my 'seeing', and I do not see how he can provide this test without begging the question, without, that is, assuming that God really does exist as the creative source of finite beings.

Theo: Mascall wants to avoid *inferring* the existence of God

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

entirely. "The function of the arguments", he says, "is to direct the attention of the mind to certain features of finite beings which can easily be overlooked and from which the existence of God can be *seen without discursive process*".⁹ True, he says that once we have clearly apprehended finite beings as they really are "all the rest follows".¹⁰ But 'follows' not logically, for "the existence of being in which essence and existence are really distinct does not *logically* imply the existence of a being in which essence and existence are really identical"; rather "there is *one act of intellection* in which we recognize both the real distinction of essence and existence in the finite existence and also its dependence upon the being in which essence and existence are identical".¹¹

In short, we do not *infer* the existence of God from the fact that essence and existence are not identical in a finite being, nor does the fact that essence and existence are not identical in a finite being *logically imply* that God exists. It is rather that in seeing, grasping, apprehending the nature of finite being as being in which essence and existence are really distinct we *at the same time* see, grasp, apprehend it as dependent upon God's creative activity. What we apprehend when we come to know finite being as it really is "is neither the-creature-without-God nor God-without-the-creature, but the-creature-deriving-being-from-God and God-as-the-creative-ground-of-the-creature: God-and-the-creature-in-the-cosmological-relation".¹²

"Natural theology", Mascall says, "is the passage from the recognition of the existence of the finite world to the affirmation of the existence of God. Its legitimacy therefore depends upon whether this passage can be validly made".¹³ Now it is Mascall's claim that this passage cannot be validly made inferentially, but it is also his claim that it can be made non-inferentially; not by reasoning, but by an intellectual act of what he calls "contuition".¹⁴ Unless this can be done, natural theology is indeed impossible.

Philo: You do not mean to say that I can 'contuit', that I can 'see' that God exists in the way that I can see that cows exist? I can 'see' that cows exist because I can see cows; should someone ask me 'How do you know that cows exist?' I can reply 'Because I have seen them'. Is it in this sense that I can 'see' that God exists, namely, because I can see God?

Theo: No. As St. Thomas rightly says, "It is impossible for

⁹ *Words and Images*, p. 84, italics mine.

¹⁰ *Existence and Analogy*, p. 69.

¹¹ *Existence and Analogy*, pp. 78-79, italics mine.

¹² *Words and Images*, p. 85.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

the soul of man in this life to see the essence of God". Mascall is not claiming that we see that God exists because we see God. We do not, in this life at any rate, see God directly, either sensibly or intellectually. The only things we can be said directly to see, sensibly and intellectually, are finite beings. But he is claiming that we can grasp or apprehend God's existence *indirectly*, *through* finite and sensible beings. To put the point in scholastic terms, the world of finite sensible objects is an *objectum quo*, an object through which the intellect passes to the apprehension of an *objectum quod*, an intelligible and trans-sensible being.¹⁵

Philo: But it strikes me that this 'seeing through' is really nothing but inference in disguise. Mascall may want to call it non-discursive knowledge. . . .

Theo: In one place he refers to it as knowledge by acquaintance as opposed to knowledge by description.¹⁶

Philo: Call it what you like; so far as I can see it is simply inference under a new name, and no inference, he admits, will do the job he wants done. I want to press this charge, but first let us get clear on just what it is that is said to be seen, grasped, or apprehended. Mascall appears to offer us two candidates: (1) the fact that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being; (2) 'God-and-the-creature-in-the-cosmological-relation'.

Theo: But these are the same. To see that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being *is* to see God-and-creature-in-relation.

Philo: I think not. In the first place, I am not sure just what it means to say that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being. I can think of two things it might mean, but both of them turn out to be non-informative; hence from neither can the existence of God be inferred, 'through' neither can the existence of God be 'seen'. (1) To say that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being may merely be to say that finite beings come into existence and pass away. But of course they do; for if they did not they would not be finite beings. 'Finite beings come into existence and pass away' is true *ex vi terminorum*. It is simply a way of expressing one of the linguistic rules for the use of the term 'finite' in this context. (2) To say that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being may merely be to say that no statement about the 'essence' of a finite being entails the statement that that being exists. But this again is simply a way of expressing a logical truth and tells us nothing about finite beings. Contrary

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

to scholastic belief, 'Essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being' is no metaphysical truth at all.

But even if it were, it strikes me as in no sense paradoxical to admit that essence and existence are really distinct in a finite being but to deny that finite beings are in any way related to or dependent upon God. Hence it cannot be the case that 'Essence and existence are really distinct in finite beings' entails 'God exists', nor can it be the case that to 'see' that essence and existence are really distinct in finite beings *is the same as* to 'see' that God exists as the creative ground of finite beings. But you say that when I see a finite being for 'what it really is' I see that its essence is really distinct from its existence. Admitted—at least for the sake of argument. I say that I can see this but that I cannot see that this 'involves' the existence of God. Your only recourse is to fall back on the soundness of the Third Way *as an argument*, at which point the criticisms usually made of that argument, to say nothing of the criticisms made of it by Farrer and Mascall, can be brought to bear.

But let us forget about essence and existence for a moment. Let us consider the claim that in seeing finite beings as they really are we see them as God-dependent in some sense. Your claim, if I am not mistaken, is that every finite being stands in some unique relation to God which you call the 'cosmological relation'. Nothing in the world is an instance of this relation, but there are things in the world, such as one thing moving another, one thing causing another, one thing making another, and so on, which are *analogues* of this relation. (This strikes me as suspect, but I will not air my suspicions at this point.) We need not know *what* this relation is, so long as we know that it is a *bona fide* relation and that the relation is between God and each and every finite being. My point is this: How, when you admit that we cannot see God, can you say that *what* we see—whether it is with the eye, the intellect, or any other organ you care to imagine—is God-and-the-creature-in-the-cosmological-relation?

On the one hand you want to say that all we see is finite being and on the other hand that we see both finite being and God in some sort of relation. This surely is paradoxical. And yet you are driven to saying this (a) by your denial that we can see God directly and (b) by your refusal to allow our inferring God from finite being. For if we could see God directly, there would be no need for looking at finite beings at all. But since we cannot see God directly, since all we can see are finite beings, and since you insist that we must 'see' God in some sense, inferring His existence having been ruled out, you hyphenate and say that

what we see is God-and-creature-in-relation. Is this not like telling me that if I look in a certain place what I shall see is not the-mat-without-the-cat, nor the-cat-without-the-mat, but the-cat-and-the-mat-in-relation, viz., the-cat-on-the-mat, though of course I cannot see the cat directly at all. If all I can see is the mat, how can I be said to see the cat and the mat in relation, unless all you mean by this is that from seeing some peculiar feature of the mat I can *infer* the presence of the cat which I cannot see?

Theo: Your analogy is inappropriate. I do not say that you can see God and creature in relation in the way that you can see the cat on the mat. What I say is that you can see God *through* finite beings when you see them as they really are. The world of finite being is the *objectum quo*, the *objectum quod* being God's existence.

Philo: But surely this will not do. I do not see God through finite beings in the way I see the street through the window, the moons of Jupiter through the telescope, or the tubercle bacillus through the microscope.

Theo: Of course not.

Philo: Then what can 'seeing God through finite beings' possibly mean? All that it can mean to say that we see God through finite beings, so far as I can tell, is that from certain features of finite beings we can *infer* the existence of God and certain of his attributes. We might say that we grasp the presence of uranium ore (*objectum quod*) through the clicking of the Geiger counter (*objectum quo*). But this clearly is an instance of inference, and inference you have foresworn.

Theo: The difficulties which you find with what I have said proceed, I think, from a deeper difference between us than has yet appeared, a basic difference in epistemology and rational psychology. You suppose that it is the business of the senses alone to see and of the intellect to reason; I do not. As Mascall says, "the intellect does not only reason, but also apprehends; it has, as its object, not only truths but *things*".¹⁷ With the schoolmen we must distinguish between two capacities of the rational soul, *ratio* and *intellectus*. As *ratio* the intellect is the power to think discursively—to define, classify, infer, demonstrate, and so on; as *intellectus* it is a receptive capacity of the soul to penetrate beneath the sensible surface of things to their "intelligible metaphysical being". Even in ordinary sense-perception this faculty of *intellectus* is involved; for sense-perception is not mere sense-awareness but also intellectual apprehension. It is

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

because of this that we can grasp the intelligible being of things through sensible phenomena. And the exercise of this capacity requires "not an attitude of detachment, ratiocination and attention to the phenomenal surface of things, useful as this is for certain purposes, but an attitude of involvement, contemplation and penetration into their intelligible depths".¹⁸ Some of us have this power actively at our command; in others, for one reason or another, it has atrophied. But I believe that it is a natural power of the human intellect of which all men are capable, if only they would take the trouble to exercise it.

Philo: But don't you see how question-begging is this distinction of yours between the "phenomenal surface of things" and their "intelligible metaphysical depths"! Clear away the rhetoric and the false air of profundity, and what does it come down to? On the one hand, the expression of linguistic and logical truisms, like 'Existence and essence are really distinct in a finite being'; on the other hand, the expression of a mixed attitude of wonder and anxiety directed at things which most of us take for granted.¹⁹ It may be true—indeed it is a truism—that a finite being cannot 'account for its own existence', and it may be the case that there is more to any given thing than its 'phenomenal surface' (whatever that is), but in no way does this 'involve' the existence of God. Suppose I grant you that the intellect apprehends as well as reasons. This will not alter the force of my objections in any way. For even if the intellect does apprehend 'the intelligible being of things', it does not follow that when it does so it sees God-and-creature-in-relation; unless by 'seeing finite things as they really are' you *mean* 'seeing them as God-dependent', in which case there is obviously no argument, for you have made seeing things as God-dependent the criterion of seeing them as they really are.

Theo: And that I do not want to do. The power of intuition is as subject to error as other intellectual capacities. But it is no more subject to error than they are; like them, it is fallible but self-correcting.²⁰ I do not insist that if the intellect sees things as they really are it *must* see them as God-dependent but only that it can and, I should say, does so see them.

Philo: From what you have said, I do not see that you can have even that. The intellect, you admit, does not see God directly any more than do the senses. But if this is so, and if all that the intellect directly apprehends is some feature or features

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁹ Cf. R. W. Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (London, 1958), p. 184.

²⁰ *Words and Images*, p. 76.

of finite beings, it cannot pass to the existence of God save inferentially. My example of the cat on the mat was not as inappropriate as you supposed. For if the model of *contuition* is ordinary seeing—and your account of it suggests that it is—then just as in ordinary seeing we cannot get from the seen mat to the unseen cat save by inference, so in this intellectual seeing, unless it is far more peculiar than you have represented it as being (in which case I really do not know what you are talking about), we cannot get from the intellectually apprehended features of finite being to the intellectually unapprehended being of God save by inference. But inference is what you are seeking to circumvent.

There is another possible model for *contuition* which you may have in mind; not ordinary visual seeing but rather understanding. But this model will serve you no better than the other. To see (understand) my dreams for what they really are, I must, according to the Freudians, see them as causally related to certain antecedent experiences. But notice that this 'seeing' requires the aid of a theory which is based upon a number of inferences. Now in your case the analogue of the Freudian theory is natural theology. But your claim is that natural theology *rests upon* our seeing finite beings as God-dependent, that natural theology is impossible without this; hence you cannot invoke this 'theory' to explain or assist our seeing things as God-dependent in the way that we can invoke the Freudian theory to account for or assist our seeing our dreams as dependent upon certain antecedent experiences. To see finite beings as God-related presupposes a prior account of God which will reasonably assure us that He exists and that His nature is such as to make plausible His office as explanation of the fact that existence and essence are really distinct in a finite being; but this theory is precisely what is in question. To see finite beings 'as they really are' cannot be to see them as requiring precisely *this* explanation, i.e., the creative activity of God, unless and until we have *other* reasons to believe that the creative activity of God is the only, or most reasonable, explanation of this fact. But this again involves inference, and inference is what you are trying to avoid.

As far as I can see, your attempt to find a non-argumentative use for the Five Ways which will avoid the usual criticisms of them and will yet support the enterprise of natural theology is a failure.

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SORTING AND GRADING

By DOUGLAS BROWNING

In his article "On Grading" J. O. Urmson offers a theory of the logic of grading labels.¹ For illustration he concerns himself primarily with the grading of apples and with the labels 'Super', 'Extra Fancy', 'First Class', etc., though he intends his remarks to extend to all grade names, including 'good' and 'bad'. This theory combines two separate but related doctrines, one concerning the logical status of grading-statements (e.g., the statements 'This is a super apple' and '*Moby Dick* is an excellent novel'), and the other concerning the nature of the grading situation itself (e.g., the activities and requirements of grading apples and novels). In this paper I will first attempt to make these two doctrines explicit, and, though I have no doubt that Urmson is mistaken in both of them, I will confine my subsequent criticism to the second doctrine, concerning the nature of the grading situation itself, for here, I will show, Urmson has made a very common but very profound error.

I. Urmson's Theory: *The Logical Status of Grading-Statements*

We may begin by asking whether such a sentence as 'This is good' is a proposition, i.e., whether it is the sort of sentence that can be true or false. The answer given by such recent ethicists as Sir David Ross, H. A. Prichard, and G. E. Moore is that such statements are indeed propositions. Others such as R. B. Perry would admit the propositional status of the statement while denying its non-empirical source and verification. A contrary answer has been given by A. J. Ayer and C. L. Stevenson to the effect that, since the meaning of the relevant grading word is emotive, the statement is no true proposition at all, but an ejaculation or an expression of emotion. The answer given by Mr. Urmson differs from all of these. He says:

"... We must say firmly . . . that to describe is to describe, to grade is to grade, and to express one's feelings is to express one's feelings, and that none of these is reducible to either of the others; nor can any of them be reduced to, defined in terms of, anything else".²

This indicates that statements of the form 'x is good' are

¹ *Logic and Language*. Second Series. Edited by A. G. N. Flew. 1953. pp. 159-186.

² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

neither propositions of the ordinary descriptive sort nor mere ejaculations, but sentences of a still quite different third sort. Urmson suggests that grading-sentences may be what J. L. Austin has called performatory sentences. 'This is good' may be similar to 'I promise', 'I know', or 'I approve', in that such sentences neither describe nor are indeed ever true or false in any conventional sense but may more properly be considered themselves actions or performances of a particularly wordy sort, or perhaps yet more appropriately said to be the giving of one's authority for an action.³ Urmson, in fact, suggests an analogy between grading and choosing, which leads one to draw a similar analogy between the statement 'This is good' and the imperative 'Choose this!'. This interpretation has been developed recently by R. M. Hare, according to whom all grading-sentences are types of prescriptive language, and hence belong to the same genus as such commands and requests as 'Shut the door!' and 'Fight Cancer!'. Similar doctrines have been developed recently by Stephen Toulmin, P. H. Nowell-Smith, and many other British writers, all of whom are commonly referred to as Analysts or as Philosophers of Ordinary Language.

Now it is interesting that these philosophers find that such a sentence as 'This is good' differs basically from the imperative 'Choose this!' in that the imperative makes less claim to objectivity than does the grading-sentence. The statement 'This is good' is one for which reasons can be given, and such reasons will have a different logical status from the grading-statements themselves, viz., they will be descriptive propositions.

The substance of the doctrine concerning the logical status of grading-statements, then, is this: Such statements, e.g., statements of the form 'x is good', are neither descriptions of one's subjective states nor ejaculations. They are much more closely related to imperatives in that they are prescriptions, recommendations, or commendations, but they are not for that reason sentences to which the terms 'justified' and 'unjustified' or 'adequate' and 'inadequate' have no application. In fact, 'This is good' differs from 'Choose this!' solely by virtue of the fact that the former contains as part of its meaning an implicit claim to certain considerations in terms of which its assertion is adequate or justified. Propositions are true or false whereas grading-statements are adequate or inadequate, but either may be said to be verifiable or justifiable in a broad sense, and in a sense that mere imperatives and expressions of emotion are not.

I do not wish to criticise Urmson or his colleagues on these

³ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

grounds, though I do believe that they are mistaken. What interests me now is the claim to adequacy or objectivity that is held as implicit in grading-statements. The recognition of such objectivity is, I believe, an insight (if one is ever justified in calling the recognition of the obvious by that name), yet the explanation offered for it is surely incorrect. I will now turn to consideration of this explanation and its criticism.

II. *Urmson's Theory: The Application of Grading Labels*

Urmson's explanation of the objectivity-claim of grading-statements derives from his doctrine concerning the nature of the grading situation itself. He is interested in making explicit the sort of requirements that a situation must fulfil in order to be called a grading activity. In order to answer the question 'What constitutes a justification for a grading-statement?' he considers the question 'How do people actually grade and justify their grading?'. This, we see, is an empirical question. It concerns the actual application of certain kinds of words and hence is a matter of linguistic usage.

Now Mr. Urmson takes it for granted that any activity of grading is in all fundamentals the same as the grading of apples in the packing sheds. The process, in brief, is this: Criteria for various grades of apples having been set up, the grader merely sorts each apple according to them. For example, an apple not less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, of good shape, free from certain russeting and all other blemishes, etc., will be placed in a bin labelled "Super Grade". The important point here is that the activity of grading is performed with reference to certain criteria. As Urmson states:

"The first thing which seems clear is that the question whether this is X is, granted the acknowledged criteria, as definitely decidable as are the empirical questions whether this is A, or B, or C. . . . The point is that if this has the empirical characters A, B, C, then it merits the grading label X, and if not, not; and this, in the required sense, is a decidable issue."⁴

Now this does not imply that a grading-statement of the sort 'This is good' is equivalent to 'This satisfies criteria ABC'. A grading-statement is not a proposition at all, according to Urmson, but something much more like an imperative, and hence it is not equivalent to a proposition. But the doctrine does mean that grading-statements may be *adequate* to certain criteria and justifiable in terms of them. This means, first, that one grades by means of criteria, and second, that one may justify one's grading-

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

statement by giving as "good reasons" statements to the effect that the object graded possesses such and such required characteristics.

R. M. Hare has suggested that although the grading-statement 'This is good' is not equivalent in meaning to 'Choose this!', for the reason of the greater objectivity-claim of the former, it is nonetheless very close in meaning to the following: 'Choose this and objects like this by virtue of criteria ABC!'. He says,

"All value-judgments are covertly universal in character, which is the same as to say that they refer to, and express acceptance of, a standard which has an application to other similar instances. . . . Whenever we commend, we have in mind something about the object commended which is the reason for our commendation."⁵

Let us be clear as to exactly what is being asserted in this doctrine. It is asserted that one does grade objects with reference to certain empirical characteristics and it is also asserted that the possession of these characteristics by an object are necessary and sufficient conditions for their being placed in a certain grade. Urmson speaks of "the pointlessness, the impossibility, of maintaining that a thing is X if it is not ABC or denying that it is X if it is ABC". Grading, then, becomes a matter of applying a label, a label which commends or gives one's stamp of approval, according to certain criteria.

I cannot agree. It does not appear to me that grading in general is very much like what is done in the apple-packing sheds. At least I must admit that I do not use typical grading words such as 'good' in this way, and I do not believe that other people do either. And furthermore, I refuse to call what is done in the apple-packing sheds 'grading' at all. Sorting is not grading.

III. *Criteria versus Considerations*

The doctrine that I will defend throughout the rest of this paper may be summarised by the following points:

(1) We generally use the verb 'grade' to cover two different activities, the most interesting of which I will call 'grading proper' and the other 'ranking'.

(2) Grading proper is neither done with reference to criteria nor justified by reference to the stating of criteria fulfilled. Such grading has nothing to do with criteria. Grading, however, does by no means preclude consideration of the properties of an object.

(3) Ranking may be considered as an activity accomplished

⁵ *The Language of Morals*. R. M. Hare. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952. pp. 129-130.

with reference to something very much like criteria and justifiable solely in terms of such criteria, but these criteria are not those by which an apple sorter sorts: i.e., the criteria for sorting into piles are not adequate to the job of ranking the piles themselves.

These points concern linguistic usage. They concern the actual character of the activity of applying grading-labels. Their accuracy depends, then, not only on how people actually grade, but on how they use their language, and hence, on what they mean. These are two sides of the same coin. I must state now, quite firmly, that the ultimate test used here is adequacy to my own activities and usages. But though I cannot presume to communicate with people as often as I would like, success in understanding and being understood in everyday conversation concerning grading activities leads me to believe that many people act and use their words as I do.

It will be worth our while to begin by considering an actual grading situation, and one which I consider a case of grading proper. Let us grade movies. We will use as our grading-labels the following:

Great
Good
Adequate
Bad
Rotten

The order of merit is obvious. Consider now the movie *The Maltese Falcon*. How will we grade it? What must I do in order to make the decision? Well, first, I must see the movie. It would be better if I saw it several times. It would also be a good idea to see several other movies, though I will not maintain that this is necessary. Secondly, I must have given it a certain amount of thought. I must consider it in its entirety and this because it is the whole movie I am grading and not just a part. I can possibly grade acting, photography, direction, etc., separately, and perhaps doing so will be helpful, but it is the movie as a whole with which I am concerned. Thirdly, I may discuss the movie with others and perhaps read reviews. Eventually, I may feel prepared to make a decision. Of course, I may not feel so prepared. There is no necessity that I grade it at all.

But suppose I now say, "*The Maltese Falcon* is a great movie". Unless this is a mere report of a subjective pro-attitude, or the expression of a pro-attitude, or simply another way of saying "Go and see *The Maltese Falcon*!", it must be justifiable in some

manner. How is one to justify it? That is simple. One draws attention to various aspects and properties of the movie, points out, perhaps, that the movie had a central motif, that Humphrey Bogart was adequate to his role, that the pace suited the theme, etc. One "talks about" the movie, so to speak. One gives "reasons". On this Urmson and I would agree. But I do not agree that such reasons and considerations are criteria.

It would be helpful here to consider a disagreement that might arise. Suppose someone were to say to me, "*The Maltese Falcon* is an adequate movie but not great, for it is just a well-done detective story, and a detective story cannot be great, no matter how well it is done". Now saying this may be understood in one of two ways, either (a) as a generalisation from the consideration of other movies known to be great, viz., 'No great movie has ever before been a detective story', or (b) as the giving of a criterion of greatness, viz., 'A great movie will be other than a detective story'. It may be pertinent to admit the generalisation as a consideration to be taken into account, but it certainly cannot be pertinent to admit the criterion, if we are to understand by this that it is a necessary condition for applying the particular grading label. We should think a person who dismissed a movie because it failed to fulfil some set standard a most insensitive person and no fit judge of art. For to his statement that no great movie can be a detective story, there is a completely devastating reply. I need only say, "Here is one that is".

This is not to deny that there are certain considerations concerning movies which have received a deserved respectability. Considerations of photography, acting, plot, and even art direction may be important and perhaps even necessary preliminaries for their proper grading. In order that grading be properly done, there may be considerations which it is necessary to make, but such considerations are not criteria that must be fulfilled. The mistake is one of a misplaced priority. Grading-statements are logically prior to the designation of good reasons or proper considerations for such judgments. That is to say, it is only by inspection of movies known to be great that the proper sort of considerations may be adduced. To say this is to say that considerations are not criteria, for a criterion is logically prior to a judgment made by its means. In fact, close consideration and the determination of the fulfilment of a criterion appear, on the face of it, to be mutually exclusive enterprises. There is no need for consideration if one is merely checking off criteria; one cannot give his consideration to that which has a relevance completely

decided for him, as a characteristic that fulfils a criterion does.

Urmson states that many disagreements concerning grading-statements may be solved by re-directing our attention to criteria. If we can agree on criteria, he maintains, we can subsequently agree on the case at hand by the mere expedient of applying them. This is nonsense. If I say that *The Maltese Falcon* is great and you say that it is not, and if we then decide independently of the disagreement at hand that great movies must fulfil criteria ABC, and if we then see that *The Maltese Falcon* does not fulfil these criteria, I am certainly faced with an inconsistency which must be alleviated by my rejecting at least one of my assertions. But if my original grading-statement is a considered one, the chances are that I will disavow the criteria. Unless it is flippant or hasty, a grading-statement is more nearly incorrigible than statements of proper grading considerations.

This does not mean that I cannot change my mind. It does mean that I would be justified in rejecting my previous grading label only after serious consideration. It is possible that my opponent, by showing that no great movies other than this one are detective stories, may convince me that I should retract my previous judgment. But the reason for this would not be that I accept a criterion and regrade accordingly, but that in the light of the consideration advanced I now see that I was previously misled by incomplete data.

Hence, I cannot agree with Urmson when he says that "grading words can only be *used* successfully for communication where criteria are accepted".⁶ Rather, I would maintain the contrary. Frankly I would not know how to talk to a person who applied the words 'good' or 'great' according to set criteria. I suggest that part of the very meaning of the word 'good' may be roughly explained by the sentence: 'I hereby certify that I do not bind myself by any set of criteria of application, but I do bind myself to the attention of whatever considerations may be brought forward by any sincere, mature, and intelligent person'. In fact, it would appear that since the words 'criterion' and 'standard' have absolutely no application in the justification of grading-statements, any such use may be considered a persuasive device. One should perhaps be on guard against people who refer grading questions to a set of supposed criteria.

Urmson's reiterated statement that "it is easier to employ criteria than to recognize them"⁷ is a begging of the question in the case of grading. If we do not recognise them, what reason is

⁶ *Logic and Language*, p. 182.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

there for saying that we nevertheless do employ them? It may be that in some activities, such as sorting, we employ criteria habitually, without being conscious of them or perhaps having forgotten what they are, but what reason is there for assuming that this holds of grading as well, unless grading is established as a kind of sorting? Urmson says of the criteria for the application of the grading label 'good' that "no one can give the precise list".⁸ But if no one can give it what reason is there for assuming the existence of any such list? In cases of sorting, e.g., in the apple-packing sheds, someone, if not the sorter then perhaps the foreman, knows what the criteria are and can construct a comprehensive list. But it is rather surprising that no one knows the list of criteria for the application of the word 'good' if such a list really exists. It makes one suspicious that perhaps there really is no such list and that Urmson is just pulling our leg.

IV. *Sorting and Ranking*

But the objection may arise that indeed some grading, if not all, is sorting, and hence involves the employment of established criteria. Movies, for example, are often graded as 'colossal', 'good', 'bad', etc., on the basis of box office appeal. The application of these labels, it may be said, is surely grading, and yet definite criteria, e.g., the total box office receipts during the first year of a movie's run, are applied. Movies are also graded as 'Grade A', 'Grade B', and 'Grade C', and yet sufficient and necessary conditions of cost of production and the type of audience aimed at are employed. There are many such cases we might bring up, such as the grading of examination papers, the grading of meat as 'Prime', 'Choice', 'Good', and so on, but these will be sufficient for our purposes. I think it should be obvious that such a usage of the term 'grading labels' differs vastly from that previously discussed. Let us see why.

First, we note that there is no necessary correlation between these grades of movies and those previously discussed. It is not unheard of for a 'Grade B' movie to be great or good. It is quite common for a 'colossal' and 'Grade A' movie to be rotten. This only means that box-office appeal, cost, and type of audience aimed at, etc., are not criteria of greatness in a movie. In fact, no species of ranking such as these will be adequate to the job of grading we considered before, and for the reason previously stated. In calling a movie 'great' I disavow by my act any bindingness of pre-established standards.

Second, it is apparent that the grading is done with reference

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

to some end or purpose. Otherwise it would not be grading at all. Merely to classify movies into groups according to box-office appeal, for instance, would be merely to sort. So far there is no order of preference. Let me be more explicit. Consider a case analogous to the sorting of apples, viz., the sorting of a rare tropical fruit. Suppose you are ignorant of the nature of this fruit but you are given a set of criteria for sorting a batch of them into baskets. When you have finished your job, for I take it that you will have little trouble, you are asked to take the basket containing the top grade fruit home to your wife. Now which will you choose? You have been given criteria for sorting, but that does not help you. You need to be told something else. You need to be given criteria for *ranking*. This is why I said before that the sort of thing done in the apple-packing sheds is not grading but sorting. I did not say that apples are not often graded. They are. But such grading is not done by the apple sorter. He is content to sort apples out into 'Super' and 'Extra Fancy', put them in a box, and paste a label on it. The grading, however, has already been done by someone else who set the criteria up according to some end or purpose, in this case probably the end of profit or marketability. We speak of apple sorting as grading only because the sorter sorts into grades, but it is not he who grades in the precise sense of the word.

A third point may be made. The purpose in view of which ranking criteria are set up is not itself a criterion in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a standard in terms of which a certain ordering has significance. I take it that, though once the sorting and ranking criteria have been set up a machine may be designed which could rank certain things, yet it is doubtful whether a machine could accomplish the setting up of criteria themselves in view of a particular end. In summary, if such ranking is to be conceived as grading at all, it must not be mere sorting, nor even the mere ordering of sorts, but must have as a guiding principle some end or purpose in terms of which an ordering indicates preference. Then to call a movie 'colossal' would not merely be to say that such a movie grossed so many dollars in one year, but that it served some end better than other movies.

By now you must be getting suspicious that the distinction I have made between grading proper and ranking is the same as that made between calling a thing intrinsically good and calling it extrinsically good. You are quite right. The phrase 'intrinsic good' or 'good-in-itself' has caused much head-scratching in philosophy, but I think that now we can see that there is no cause for alarm. To say that an object is intrinsically valuable

is to say no more than that it can be graded without reference to criteria, either of sorting or of ranking.

In the case of extrinsic goods, the criteria for ranking are already sketched in, however vaguely, by the end or purpose. Sometimes, however, items sorted into ranks are found upon examination to display surprising correlations with empirical characteristics not directly related to the particular end. If these characteristics can be more efficiently discriminated than those marked out by the end, they may be specified as sorting criteria. A wine-taster may be so assured that that wine which has a certain colour, comes from a certain area, was bottled in a particular year, etc., is pleasant-tasting that he may very well set up these as sorting criteria in place of the standard of actual taste. It is not at all the case here that the end is no longer important but only that a 'short-cut' has been taken. This is done for the sake of expedience since as soon as such sorting standards have been set up one may employ dullards or machines to do a good part of the work, but as soon as it is discovered that there are good wines that do not conform to these criteria, or bad wines that do so conform, then the criteria will, I assure you, be altered. For it is the end which determines the character of the entire enterprise. All sorting and all ranking is for the sake of an end.

It is this characteristic of ranking situations, I believe, that has led to the use of such labels as 'good' and 'great' for both ranking and grading proper. In situations of grading proper use of the grading label always implies the logical priority of the act of grading over whatever considerations concerning the nature of the object graded may be used as justifications or 'good reasons' for the act. One conforms one's 'standards' to one's grading insights and not the contrary. Not many activities in life are like this. But one highly similar activity is ranking. Here too the adequacy of certain standards is regulated by a more basic judgment: i.e., the criteria of sorting and ranking are regulated by the particular purpose of the activity. This regulative character of both activities is incorporated into the very meaning of their relevant terms, so that grading labels and ranking labels imply a certain freedom from set standards. It is apparent how the word 'good', for instance, whether it began its history as a ranking word or as a grading word, could extend its meaning to both activities. My own guess would be that such words were originally ranking words which indicated not only this regulative character but also a preferential status. But whatever the case may be, the word 'good' does indeed have these two applications of 'intrinsic good' and 'extrinsic good', yet the two applications have something in common, and reveal a similarity between grading and ranking.

V. *Conclusion and Final Remarks*

In order to sort apples it is necessary that certain criteria be set up. We may, for instance, sort apples entirely according to colour, putting green apples in one pile, light red in another, dark red in another, and so on. The criteria in this case would be the designation of certain colour ranges. We may run into difficulties of a marginal sort, but these are to be expected. Generally, however, we know that if an apple has the required characteristics it may be labelled accordingly and that no apples so labelled may lack these characteristics. The pile for dark red apples will contain only dark red apples and it will contain, furthermore, all dark red apples that come to hand. It may be possible in some cases to set up a sorting machine. Now the purpose of such sorting may not be known to the sorter, especially if it is a machine, but that does not matter. On the other hand, he may know what the ultimate purpose is, if there is a purpose, but that does not matter either. In order to sort correctly no purpose is required. All one needs is a set of criteria and plenty of apples.

The use of the labels 'Super' and 'Extra Fancy' for apples would seem to indicate that an order of preference has been added for the sorts so labelled. Application of such labels would generally mean that ranking has been done. However, the ranking of apple sorts has not been done by the apple sorter, but probably by the apple grower or the apple marketer. He is the one who has set up the criteria in the first place in order to arrange the sorts according to market value. An order of preference takes on meaning only in view of some regulatory purpose or end. In the case of apples, the criterion of ranking may be some principle of marketability and this criterion is meaningful in terms of a further purpose of making a profit for the apple wholesaler.

A third type of activity may be called grading proper (though the possibility of subjecting apples to an activity of grading proper appears remote, unless apples may be considered as aesthetic objects). It does not involve criteria of sorting nor criteria of ranking. This activity is the application of a label which indicates an order of preference (though I must admit that I am not sure that this is quite the correct way to phrase it) without reference to set standards, even without reference to a particular end. In the application of such labels the recognition of certain criteria is not implicit. By the word 'criteria' we understand standards which are logically prior to certain judgments. This means only that when the fulfilment of certain empirical conditions are necessary for the assertion of a judgment, we may call such conditions 'criteria'. But in grading proper there are no such conditions. There are,

of course, considerations that must and can be made. If one makes the grading-statement 'this is good' without close consideration of the various characteristics of what has been graded, then we are right to consider this statement ill-founded and premature. If there are no characteristics of the object graded by means of which one can defend or justify one's judgment, then we are right to consider that judgment suspect.

That there are activities which appear to be of this sort can hardly be doubted. It may be said that all such activities are really activities of sorting or ranking, but I can find no justification for such a view. I have a tendency to believe that there is one fundamental use of grading words that contains as part of its very import that there are no such binding conditions as in the cases of sorting and ranking.

Urmson's error, the error of thinking that all grading is sorting, is common. It is generally made by people who have come to think that the grounds of a belief or a statement must be examined and made clear before the belief can be fully understood. This leads one, quite often, to the absurd notion that a theory of knowledge is somehow prior to knowledge itself, that true knowledge is a matter of checking off certain steps or criteria. There is a game that certain people play of querying all statements with the question: "But what is your criterion of such and such?" This game may get in one's blood to such an extent that it is virtually a disease. I call it the "epistemological disease". I do not wish to deny that such a question is often very helpful in understanding one's meaning, but I do think that quite often it is out of place and reveals an insensitivity to both experience and language on the part of the person who asks it. I think that sometimes the question "What is your criterion?" cannot be answered because it is meaningless in the context. One might well reply: "Criteria have no relevance to the problem at hand and the fact that you can ask such a question reveals either a perversity on your part or the fact that you have not really been listening to what I have said".

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DISCUSSION

MR. RESCHER'S REFORMULATION OF THE ONTOLOGICAL PROOF

By KEITH GUNDERSON AND RICHARD ROUTLEY

In the midst of revived philosophical interest in theological issues, we wish to record our objections to one recent attempt at reformulating the ontological proof for the existence of God.¹ In trying to navigate around what he calls the three "traditional objections" to the proof—viz.: (1) that it "rests upon an explicit definition *per genus et differentiam*" which in turn "depends upon the thesis that *existence* has the status of a predicate", (2) that it invokes "the procedure of defining into existence", and (3) that if the "proof were logically sound, its theological serviceability would be insignificant"—Mr. Rescher, we believe, runs aground on the following criticisms.

1. In pointing out that our understanding of a term need not come about through explicit definition *per genus et differentiam*, but that we may also arrive at it through "experience-presupposing definitions", Rescher confines his treatment of how we come to understand terms to learning definitions of one sort or another. Now he does not rule out other ways, but neither does he discuss or take note of them. And it is important to note that there are other ways, lest it be thought that if we do not come to understand terms through explicit definitions as stated above, we come to understand them through experience-presupposing definitions as described by Rescher. For example, we all seem to come to understand the meanings of various words over a more or less extended period of time, without ever having them defined for us. Later we might come across explicit definitions of the words, though we would not on that account say that we came to understand them through explicit definition. We might instead wish to say that only then would the definition make any sense to us. And we need not say that prior to such a time there was any defining going on at all. Perhaps Rescher would want to say that in all such cases we were only talking about what he calls "experience-presupposing definitions". Then we would simply ask if there was any "coming to understand" which did not count as learning such a definition. But there seems to be little reason why we could not come to understand the meaning of the word

¹ "The Ontological Proof Revisited", this *Journal*, August, 1959.

'God' through the reading of religious literature—perhaps by definitions and accounts other than the so-called "experience-presupposing" kind. These ways should not be neglected—as Rescher neglects them—even if experience-presupposing definitions do provide a way of coming to understand the world. Or, if the reading of religious literature resulted in an understanding of the word 'God', let us say, would it too simply be counted as one form of religious experience in Rescher's terms?

But these comments need a more concrete elaboration.

2. Some important difficulties, which are hinted at by the above, are those which arise in trying to understand Rescher's account of "experience-presupposing definitions". The phrase seems to us to be a hopelessly general catch-all. Included in his category of terms which can *only* be learned in this way, we find "perception words (names of colours, odours, etc.), sensation words (aches, pains, etc.), feeling words (alacrity, lethargy, etc.), emotion words (anger, gaiety, etc.)". Some of these seem most unlike the others in certain important respect, and all of these seem most unlike the word 'God', contrary to the close parallel which he later tries to draw between them, and upon which his main argument rests. (E.g.: it is not clear that words like 'red' are *names* of colours. If they are names at all, they are probably not the same kind of name as 'God'. Many questions would arise about 'God'—whether it is a proper name, the name of a person, of a spirit, etc.—that would not arise about 'red'.)

By saying that the above terms "characterize the modes and character of immediate experience", we interpret Rescher as meaning that a person who is not visually defective comes to understand the word 'red', for example, when he hears or reads that something is red when he is looking at that something, etc. If this is what he means, then it seems clear that even if this were the case for every instance of someone coming to understand the word 'red', not all the types of word listed by him are alike in this respect. For example, would Goliath have to have a hammering pain in his head in order to understand the meaning of 'hammering pain'? Is our range of experience short of hammering pains inadequate for our coming to understand the meaning of 'hammering pain'? Or, rather, would this range of experience be the very sort which Rescher would want to say is presupposed by any understanding of the phrase? If this is so, then everything prior to our understanding a term might count as presupposed experience. But then Rescher is saying no more than that our understanding a term presupposes certain experiences prior to our understanding. And if he thinks that understanding the phrase

'hammering pain' presupposes a hammering pain experience, he is wrong. It is obvious that we do understand a wide variety of perception, sensation, feeling, and emotion words and phrases without ever having had the experiences to which they might be properly used to refer, and that we exhibit this understanding when, having had a new or unusual experience (a feeling, for example), we know how to talk about it, how to report or describe it. We do not say that our understanding of the terms we use in discussing it was simultaneous with the experience discussed, and that only *now* do we understand the words, rather we say that our prior understanding of the meanings of certain terms enables us now to discuss the experience intelligently.

Exceptions to Rescher's account arise in other ways as well, as in the case of colour words and Hume's missing shade of blue. We might think of a term for designating the missing shade of blue—call it 'absentblue'—and then "teach" the meaning of the term by using various colour charts on which the missing shade of blue was missing. All in all, Rescher fails to distinguish between coming to understand a word in a language and having experiences for which such a word is appropriate for referring to or describing.

3. Further difficulties with his use of the phrase "experience-presupposing terms" arise when he says of these terms that "The experiences in question are, to be sure, themselves a wholly subjective matter whose contents cannot be communicated in full". (Though he admits there "are perfectly objective *tests* as to whether or not an experience of the type in question has taken place".) But what can this mean? If he means to say more than that when an experience is my experience it is in one trivial sense only mine, he must show what sort of content others are deprived of, why the experience is "subjective" and not fully communicable. The quotation above seems dangerously close to asserting that we can't know the mind of another. Furthermore, the phrase "cannot be communicated in full" in the above context is unclear in that we are never told what would count for or against such experiences being communicated in full. In other words, we are not able to construct a parallel to "Because of the buzzing interruptions on the line, Jezebel found her message was not communicated in full".

4. We now come to one of the main thrusts in the reformulation. This is the claim that 'Orange is more similar to red than to green' is a synthetic *a priori* truth. (The later contention that the reformulation is invulnerable to the traditional objections is based on the assertion that 'God exists', like the above statement, is synthetic *a priori*.) We shall try to show that even if the

parallel did hold (though it doesn't), nothing would be gained, since 'Orange is more similar to red than green' is itself neither *a priori* nor even true in certain contexts.

Rescher says of the proposition: "It is synthetic in that it presupposes experience, namely that fundamental experience indispensable for having a proper grasp of . . . the key terms involved. Thus, since it is presupposed for the *meaningfulness* of the proposition, experience is, *a fortiori*, involved in its truth. On the other hand, the proposition is *a priori* because its truth 'follows' from its meaning in the sense that once a body of experience adequate as a basis for a grasp of the meaning of the terms is given, this is *ipso facto* adequate as a basis for the truth of the proposition in question. It would be incorrect to construe a dissent from such a proposition as expressive of disagreement on the facts, for it is properly to be taken as *prima facie* evidence that its meaning was not correctly understood, i.e. that there exist gaps or deficiencies in the visual experience of the dissenter that preclude a correct understanding of the statements in question."

But such claims capitalize on treating the proposition apart from any context. If someone were simply to blurt out "Orange is more similar to red than to green" we might not know whether it was true or false or what we should say. Once the expression is given a context it is immediately seen that it is not necessarily true. For one might say that considered in relation to yellow orange is more similar to green than red. And if someone were to ask "Is orange more similar to red than to green?" when, for example, there were a number of coloured cards in front of him, we might look at those cards and then reply "In what respect?" having noticed that some shades were very dull and some very bright. And if the orange cards and the green cards were of very dull shades, whereas the red card was a very bright shade, it would be in order to say "Certainly not in respect to its brightness". So we find that the proposition is neither synthetically nor analytically true in a number of cases. *A fortiori* it is not true synthetically *a priori*.

Moreover it is not at all clear that what Rescher understands to be a synthetic *a priori* truth is a synthetic *a priori* truth, at least in any recognized philosophical sense. Certainly it is not in accord with Kant's usage. For Kant the nature of our experience presupposes certain synthetic *a priori* truths. These are synthetic in that they are said to relate to our experience of the world, but are *a priori* in that they are said not to be "derived" from such experience, but are seen as a necessary condition for the very

possibility of such experience. Rescher works with a topsy-turvy version of the synthetic *a priori*, since for him such truths presuppose having a "body of experience" previous to the grasping of the meanings of the terms involved. Such truths seem directly derived from experience and not *a priori*. It is, of course, apparent that some "body of experience" is necessary for grasping the terms of any proposition. But "body of experience" is such an all-accommodating phrase that, by itself, it can hardly be used as a criterion for marking out synthetic *a priori* propositions from other kinds.

It should also be mentioned that the test of understanding the meaning of a term is not that one has had certain visual experiences. In the above case Rescher slips into treating one's having had certain experiences as a guarantee for one's understanding the meanings of the terms which could properly be used in describing such experiences; i.e., he begins by saying that if we are to know the meaning of a term, we must have certain experiences, but in effect ends up by assuming that if we have the experiences, they will guarantee our understanding of the meanings of the terms in question.

5. His next move is crucial, and, we feel, unwarranted. He says, "I propose to classify the word 'God' within the category of words which cannot be given an explicit definition but whose meaning can only be grasped within experience". (As if when we understood the meaning of a word through explicit definition we should come to understand in a way which was peculiar in that it was somehow not "within experience". What is probably meant is that it is not like coming to understand the meaning of the word 'red' by seeing red. But it is not clear that we ever come to understand solely in this way.) Rescher continues: "On this view a person whose history is devoid of religious experience simply cannot have an adequate grasp of the meaning of the word 'God'. And I submit that a person who *does* have a basis of experience adequate to an understanding of this term, also has, *ipso facto*, the experiential basis of evidence adequate to underwrite rational, warranted assent to the proposition that God exists." Thus it seems that the only adequate test for whether someone understands the word 'God' is whether he gives assent to the proposition 'God exists'. But if this is what Rescher wants to maintain, it is circular. If this is not the case, then there are counter-examples. Rescher would have to deny that a person understood the word 'God' who, let us say, had a conversion experience, became active in the church, prayed daily, read the Bible, etc., but who finally, at some point—perhaps after many years—no longer assented to

the proposition that God exists. Thus when such a person says "I used to believe that God exists, but I don't any longer" Rescher will have to say of him either that he used to understand the word, though he no longer does, or that he never did. If he says the former he must meet the counter-reply of one who says that he does indeed understand the meaning of the word 'God', and that is precisely why he is leaving the church, becoming a militant atheist, etc. He is not doing so because his understanding of the meaning of certain words is slipping. Or if he maintains the latter, how are we to test those who really understand the word 'God', and distinguish them from those who simply assert that God exists on the basis of a misunderstanding?

Experience, in the way Rescher treats it, isn't enough by itself. It cannot guarantee assent. Two people might have similar religious experiences on the basis of which one might say that God exists, and the other not. Furthermore, if Rescher's account were correct, then it might be the case that some day no one will believe that God exists, to which he would have to respond by saying that no one then really understood the word 'God'. How strange it would be to have a word in the language which occurred frequently in book titles, speeches, conversations, commands, curses, etc., which no one really understood! What then would the word 'God' mean? Would it have changed its meaning, or would it then have no meaning at all? And haven't we ways of now telling whether people understand the word 'God', without knowing their future religious affiliations?

And when are we to say that someone has had a religious experience, a vision, let us say, as opposed to a hallucination? How are we to know that it was God who told me that such-and-such would happen? Would we know if we managed to predict correctly the winner of the Irish Sweepstakes? In other words, just how is the so-called religious experience which has been said to be necessary to our understanding of the word 'God' to be marked out from a variety of experiences? Rescher has failed to supply such criteria.

6. He has turned the ontological argument into an argument from religious experience. In the last analysis it is admitted that as reformulated it is no longer a proof. But confession does not always bring absolution. We want to say: "So *that's* your reformulation! We thought there was to be a revisitation of the ontological proof. Now it turns out to be simply an assertion to the effect that anyone who has had a certain sort of religious experience will understand the word 'God' and (may) assent to the proposition 'God exists', and mean no more by this than that

he has had a certain experience." But one does not avoid traditional objections to an argument by producing an entirely different argument any more than one fixes the tear in a friend's tie by giving him an entirely different tie.

7. In all fairness it should be pointed out that the above contention concerning assenting to the proposition glosses over one point. For it is not clear whether Rescher wishes to regard the proposition 'God exists', when uttered by those who understand it, as analytic or as a necessary truth. Moreover, he denies at one point that the reformulated argument is deductive. But he vacillates between two theses: (1) the stronger one; viz., that given a certain body of experience, the person who has assimilated it must, in effect, assent to the proposition that God exists, since it would be self-contradictory for him to deny it; and the weaker one (2) that if a person has suitable experiences then he knows the meaning of 'God exists' and has full reason for asserting that it is true. An example of the latter thesis is provided where he says: "A body of experience adequate as a basis for an understanding of this term must also be adequate as an evidential basis for assent to the proposition that God exists." But he then goes on to say: "Therefore . . . a denial of God's existence is indicative of a failure to grasp the meaning of the word." And when he goes on to say "But the evidential basis for its truth does not call for any experience *over and above* that demanded by its meaning" he has simply restated, not reformulated (nor even replaced) the ontological argument.

8. He in effect replaces 'true' with 'true for x'. For on his account 'It is true that God exists' when said by x would mean simply 'It is true for x on the basis of x's experience'.

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SENSATIONS AND BRAIN PROCESSES: A REJOINDER TO DR. PITCHER AND MR. JOSKE¹

By J. J. C. SMART

Philosophers do commonly regard the thesis that experiences are identical with brain processes as paradoxical. But psychologists and physiologists commonly regard it as a truism. So the thesis is not, as Dr. Pitcher says, *obviously* paradoxical. I favour it for lack of a consistent and scientifically plausible alternative. Pitcher

¹ This *Journal*, August, 1960, pp. 150-160. Pitcher's note is a reply to my "Sensations and Brain Processes", *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 68, 1959, pp. 141-256.

has not indicated any such. Nor am I convinced by his arguments against me. I shall explain where I consider these to fail, and shall also indicate that his own arguments would tend to lead him to adopt a theory of non-physical *properties*, and such properties would be as much nomological danglers as non-physical processes would be.

Near the top of p. 152 Pitcher says that I can give no reason why I say 'one process, not two'. I can indeed give no empirical reason against the epiphenomenalist. But I did give reasons based on Occam's razor and scientific plausibility. (The case is analogous to that of why we should not say that the world began ten minutes ago just as it was ten minutes ago.) The same considerations apply to the flash of lightning and the electric discharge.² To say that these are identical is to say more than that all and only regions of space that contain the one contain the other. In the case of the experience it is indeed not ordinarily described as occupying a region of space, but in effect as 'like what is going on in me when . . .'. (Recall that I use the word 'like' in such a way that something can be like itself.) This is the queerness. In my article, in the course of replying to an objection by Professor Black, I expressed qualms as to whether I was entitled to the view that we could say that something was like something else without being able to say in what respect it was like. I am now more sure of this. Thinking cybernetically it is indeed easier to envisage the nervous system as being able to react to likenesses of its internal processes without being able to issue descriptions of these likenesses. (Pitcher's chief objection to me is, so far as I understand it, much the same as Black's.)

Now for the duck-rabbit. Surely the picture of the duck *is* a picture of a rabbit. It is a material object (ink on paper) with two relational properties: (1) that of forcibly reminding one of ducks at certain times, and (2) that of forcibly reminding one of rabbits at certain other times. Is Pitcher trying to say that just as the duck-rabbit has these two different properties, so the experience has two sorts of properties—(1) those observed by the neuro-physiologist and (2) those given by 'inner sense'? This looks like the double aspect theory.

Curiously enough Pitcher's 'defender of Smart's thesis' on p. 155 attributes to me the double aspect theory. But I am just as opposed to the double aspect theory as I am to dualism. Non-physical or emergent *properties* are just as objectionable and just as much nomological danglers as are non-physical *processes*. I do not say that an experience is an *appearance* of the brain process.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152, near bottom.

I say that it *is* the brain process. Pitcher accuses me of confusion between a full *description* and a full *list*. I deny this charge. What I require of a complete brain process account is that it should provide *both* a full list *and* a full description. I should also like to point out that the difference between a full description and a full list is by implication quite clear in the excellent article 'Is Consciousness a Brain Process?' by U. T. Place,³ on which so much of my own was based. See his example of the packing case which is also a table. This is like Pitcher's three black marks that are also a word. (To say that they are a word is to say something relational about them: how they affect human beings.)

No doubt Pitcher will deny that he is proposing a theory of emergent properties. Perhaps I have misunderstood his duck-rabbit analogy. Is his view, broadly, a behaviourist one? There are objections to this too. Or is there under the neo-Wittgensteinian subtleties⁴ no positive view at all? This is fair enough if Pitcher's purpose is simply to refute me, but the tone of his article does not suggest that he thinks that there is a big unsolved problem here.

I want to quarrel with only the last paragraph of Mr. Joske's article. My account of what we mean by sensation reports was in terms of 'what is going on in me is like what is going on in me when . . .'. The words in quotes are topic neutral. A dualist would think that they referred to some non-physical process and I would think that they refer to a brain process. Joske asks how it is, then, that one can describe one's experience so precisely. My reply is that such descriptions can be very precise but that the precision occurs in the stimulus language. The lunatic in Joske's example may say 'what is going on in me is like what is going on in me when there is before my eyes a pink rabbit with purple spots, long yellow ears and a green tail'. Remember that I did not say that the brain process was the mental image or sense-datum. (As Joske correctly reports, p. 158.) In a sense, as I said in the article, there is no such thing as an image or sense-datum but only the experience of having one.

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³ *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 47, 1956, pp. 44-50.

⁴ I have eschewed some of these subtleties for the sake of conciseness and to avoid side issues. For example I have long been aware that the having of an after-image is not a sensation, as an itch is. (See the beginning of Pitcher's article.) But I have come to the conclusion that in contexts like the present one it is convenient and harmless to use the word 'sensation' a little more widely than in ordinary language.

MORAL DISTINCTIONS IN A STATE OF NATURE

By S. A. GRAVE

I want to discuss Professor Baier's grounds for holding that "in a state of nature" or "outside society", "the very distinction between right and wrong vanishes" (*The Moral Point of View*, p. 315).

What is meant by "in a state of nature", "outside society"? "If human beings lived in small, biologically necessary but relatively impermanent groups consisting of one man, one woman, and their dependent offspring, if they had no language or only the most rudimentary forms of one, if they had no fund of knowledge and no practical skills to pass on, if they did not inculcate in their young certain uniform rules of behaviour, then we would have to say that these people lived 'outside society' " (p. 236).

One feature of this description is interestingly un-Hobbesian. Hobbes' men in a state of nature are good practical reasoners: with the fear of death before their eyes they have worked out the terms of the contract which alone would give them security (*Leviathan*, I. 13). Baier's men, since they have no funded experience, no shared skills and at best only the rudiments of language, can have "no system of reasoning at all" (p. 240). It is not primarily as a matter of anthropological conjecture that Baier deprives them of the conditions which make reasoning possible: they are not to be allowed reasoning because they are not to know right from wrong, even if right and wrong exist in a state of nature. Baier's state of nature is quite obviously fashioned—legitimately, of course, for his purposes—so as to bring out in negative illustration the reference to society involved in different ways in the answers he gives to the questions "How do we know what is right?", "Why do we do what is right?", "Why should we do what is right?". Since his answer to the first question is "By reasoning, by deliberation" (10.3), there is no reasoning in a state of nature; since his answer to the second is "By training" (11.3) there is no training in a state of nature. Baier's answer to his third question involves, as we shall see, the argument that without a rational justification for the distinction between right and wrong there is no such distinction; without established ways of behaviour no such justification. Therefore there are no established ways of behaviour in his state of nature.

As a concession, however, to the real if remote possibility of human existence before society there are groups in Baier's state of nature, families of a sort, and for their briefest survival as groups

there must be at least some rough and roughly dependable adjustment of the behaviour of individuals to one another. Consequently the conditions which Baier requires for the total absence of moral distinctions in a state of nature are not fulfilled. What we want is a state of nature in which men are groupless, solitaries, yet not mythical beings (in Hobbes' words) "sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity". We can have it by locating the state of nature not before but after society, after its dissolution by the Bomb, the Deluge, the Death of Grass, or some other sufficiently vast catastrophe. It is true that the survivors will be able to reason, so that their situation is not close enough to nature for all of Baier's purposes; true also that they have been trained to be moral, but only to meet calculable pressures. The important thing is that after the catastrophe there will no longer be established ways of behaviour. Will moral distinctions disappear with them?

Where there are no established ways of behaviour, Baier argues (pp. 311-4), there are "no reliable expectations about other people's behaviour other than that they will follow their inclination or their interest". And these expectations lead to the further expectation that they will defend their interests by preventive attack. Reason therefore will counsel every man to attack before he is attacked. Thus the state of nature, which is the absence of society, becomes the state of nature which is the war of all against all. Anyone in this war who tried to follow the rules of morality would be destroyed. "In such a state, it is therefore contrary to reason to be moral." Baier ends his argument with an answer to the objection that "no one is entitled to do wrong just because someone else is doing wrong". His answer is that this objection "begs the question whether it *is* wrong for anyone in this state to disregard the demands of morality. It cannot be wrong to break a treaty or make preventive war if we have no reason to obey the moral rules. For to say that it is wrong to do so is to say that we ought not to do so. But if we have no reason for obeying the moral rule, then we have no reason overruling self-interest, hence no reason for keeping the treaty when keeping it is not in our interest, hence it is not true that we have a reason for keeping it, hence not true that we ought to keep it, hence not true that it is wrong not to keep it".

A curious feature of this argument, since its conclusion is so firmly asserted, is Baier's casual attitude towards one of his essential premisses. That men in a state of nature would follow their inclination or their interest is, he says, an empirical proposition (in its relevant meaning), and he mildly claims "some

empirical evidence" for it. This evidence is drawn from the conduct of sovereign states, whose position in the family of nations is analogous to the position of individuals in a state of nature and who, with the words of morality in their mouths, put their own interests first, second and third (pp. 312-3).

The evidence is conflicting and needs association with the equally conflicting evidence drawn from the records of contact between travellers and the new peoples they found. A serious interest in the verification of the Hobbesian proposition it supports would require an examination of all the evidence for the "natural" benevolence to which writers such as Shaftesbury appealed when they thought they were refuting Hobbes' metaphysical egoism by refuting his opinion that man is to man by nature a wolf. Supposing it, however, agreed that men in a state of nature would act only from interest and (predominantly malevolent) inclination, there would be no moral shock in the inference that every man has the right to shoot first. If it is your life or mine there is no reason (all other things being equal, as they are here) why it should be mine. But no distinction at all between right and wrong? Anything at all done to a person a matter of moral indifference? Torturing people for fun as innocent as lying on the grass in the sun?

How does Baier's argument support its unrestricted conclusion? In this way, I think: To say that an action is wrong is to imply that there is a reason for not doing it. If there is no such reason what is said is necessarily false (p. 237) or meaningless (p. 222). There are no moral distinctions in a state of nature because no reason could be given for them. Moral rules are designed to overrule individual self-interest when it is "in the interest of everyone alike" that it should be overruled (p. 314), and just because this is the function of moral rules one can have no reason for adopting them when, as in a state of nature, one has no reason for believing that others will adopt them.

It is for Baier, then, all or nothing: an assurance that people will by and large do as they would be done by, or nothing wrong in anything that a man does to another man. And this moral holism, this version of the unity of virtue, seems to be a plain consequence of Baier's demand in every case for the reason why an action is right or wrong, other than its being the action it is, and his provision of a single reason valid for every case. I want to make a comment first on the demand and then on the single reason.

If someone says "You ought not to do that" and, asked why,

answers that it is wrong, and, asked why, answers that there is no reason at all, he shows, I would agree, that he does not know the meaning of the words "ought" and "wrong". But he might quite properly be astonished at the demand for a reason, unable to imagine a better reason for not doing the thing in question than that it is the thing it is. (Why is it wrong to smash a man's face in when you happen to dislike it?) If he meets the demand for a reason by asking you to look at the thing itself, he is not displaying any incompetence in his handling of the language of morality. Nothing is wrong without a reason, but we do not always have to go beyond the thing itself to find it. Baier does not say in so many words that we have to. Nevertheless, he implies it, since his argument implies that with the dissolution of society the moral character of an action would change without any change in the action.

It would change because the dissolution of society removes the reason which, according to Baier, collectively justifies the rules of morality, the reason for being moral. Why should I be moral? Let us look, Baier says, at "two alternative worlds, one in which moral reasons are always treated by everyone as superior to reasons of self-interest and one in which the reverse is the practice. And we can see that the first world is the better world because we can see that the second world would be the sort which Hobbes describes as the state of nature.

"This shows that I ought to be moral, for when I ask the question 'What ought I do?' I am asking, 'Which is the course of action supported by the best reasons?' But since it has just been shown that moral reasons are superior to reasons of self-interest, I have been given a reason for being moral, for following moral reasons rather than any other, namely, they are better reasons than any other" (p. 310).

Before asking whether one has been given a good reason for being moral, I want to say something about the relation of this reason to the rightness or wrongness of a particular action or particular type of action. When a person, genuinely puzzled, asks why this or that is wrong, euthanasia for instance, when he can "see nothing wrong in it", this is not the sort of reason he has in mind or would accept; it is not the sort of reason even remotely suggested by Baier's words "A person who says, 'A ought to do X', and when asked 'Why?' replies that there is no reason must be said not to know the use of the word 'ought'" (p. 222). Baier does not imply, of course, that this single reason takes the place of specific reasons for calling anything right or wrong, but he does imply that without it they are not reasons. Consequently his

position seems to me not very distant from that of the moral philosophers he has previously criticized (p. 223) who, dealing in first principles, link reasons for reasons to an "ultimate reason".

Does Baier give us a good reason for being moral? If we have to choose between a world in which "moral reasons are always treated by everyone as superior to reasons of self-interest and one in which the reverse is the practice", there is no doubt about the rational choice. There is, however, for the moral sceptic who wants to act on his convictions a happy mean between these two extremes: a world in which other people treat moral reasons as superior to reasons of self-interest and he doesn't.

But, it might be objected, he can't have a reason for behaving in this way, for if he has a reason so has everyone else. Everyone therefore has a reason for behaving in a way which would bring about the state of nature described by Hobbes, for behaving in a way therefore which everyone can see is contrary to reason.

A modification of an argument used by Baier in another connection (pp. 209-12) unfortunately answers this objection. Does a man have a reason for not behaving in a certain way simply in the knowledge that if everyone behaved in this way the consequences would be bad for everyone? He needs to know more than this before he has a reason for his abstinence: he needs to know that other people are likely to behave in this way if he does. And the practical moral sceptic knows that they are not likely to; he can count on society, on the conformity of other people to established ways of behaviour.

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CRITICAL NOTICE

SECOND THOUGHTS IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY. By A. C. Ewing. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959. vii, 190 pp. 21s. (U.K.).

AN ANALYSIS OF MORALS. By John Hartland-Swann. London, Allen and Unwin, 1960. 208 pp. 25s. (U.K.).

In ethics, Mr. Hartland-Swann tells us, "very notable advances have been made in the last thirty years or so—advances which have in large measure revolutionized our *approach* to ethics or moral philosophy". Ambiguously, he adds that contemporary philosophers are "only too ready" to acknowledge their debt to "the great moralists of the past"; however, he seems to mean this as a tribute to those moralists and not as a sneer at them. But he goes on to say that "ethics is a branch of philosophy in which most of the *old* issues are well on the way to settlement—although it is clear enough that many new issues have arisen whose discussion and clarification will provide philosophers with much to do for many years to come" (pp. 13-14). This is in his introduction. Towards the end of the book he says that "one of my purposes has been to show, more by implication than by direct assault, that all the hallowed traditional moral theories—except those which have confined themselves to the analysis of ethical concepts—have been fundamentally misguided" (p. 147). He follows this with an attack on intuitionism and utilitarianism, as representing two main types of traditional theory. Both are misguided, it appears, because they are objectivist.

Dr. Ewing's second thoughts are not so different from his first as to make him accept this view. His book is mainly about subjectivism and objectivism; and it is quite clear that he and Hartland-Swann are on opposite sides of the fence. Yet Ewing, too, feels that he is merely expounding and amplifying the work of recent moral philosophers. For him, too, contemporary moral philosophy has succeeded in solving at least some of the traditional problems. In particular, he thinks that recent moral philosophers have discovered a "middle way" in moral philosophy which makes it possible to accept moral objectivism while avoiding some of its more unpalatable metaphysical implications. (It is true that he does not believe this of all contemporary moral philosophers; there are some whom he calls subjectivists. But even this distinction, vital thought it is for Ewing, apparently depends on quite subtle points of interpretation: "When first starting to write this book", we are told in a foot-note, "I classified Hare with

the subjectivists; but after I had discussed my first chapter personally with him, it seemed to me that he belongs rather to the [middle way] group of writers.”)

Now this is really rather curious. According to Hartland-Swann, the great achievement of recent moral philosophy is that it has settled the subjectivist-objectivist controversy in favour of subjectivism. According to Ewing, the great achievement of recent moral philosophy is that it has revealed that opposition to objectivism was based on a fundamental misapprehension. Both are quite sure that recent moral philosophy has succeeded in clarifying the issues. Reading the two together may well arouse a reactionary suspicion that the issues have actually been obscured.

In this review I am going to give free rein to this suspicion. I am going to suggest that the main issues, and in particular the issue between subjectivism and objectivism, were made quite clear enough by the traditional moral philosophers, and that that issue still remains after the problems have been re-stated in modern terms; that in so far as Hartland-Swann, and other modern philosophers, have established a case for subjectivism, it has been by using the traditional arguments; that the arguments which have impressed Ewing, and made him modify his original position, might have been learned from Hutcheson as readily as from Hare; and that “the middle way” appears to be one only because it is described in ambiguous terms which admit of either a subjectivist or an objectivist interpretation. To say this is not to deny the value of recent work in moral philosophy, for to restate familiar arguments in a new context and to show their connection with new approaches to other philosophical problems can be very valuable indeed. Nor is it merely to indulge in a fruitless historical discussion about who said what first. It is obviously important to know whether or not we have really settled old issues and are going on to new ones.

One digression first. I have said that Ewing’s book is mainly about subjectivism and objectivism. But Hartland-Swann’s is not. He regards this as one of the old issues which have been happily settled, and devotes most of his space to those new ones which have arisen in consequence. Clearly a review which concentrates on this issue will hardly be fair to him. Let me, then, say something, though briefly, about his book as a whole.

It seems to me that the book does three separate things. Much of it is devoted to the preliminary analysis of points about which there is no substantial disagreement, but which it is obviously necessary for beginners to get clear. An example would be his

analysis of everyday moral arguments so as to show that they consist in an implicit appeal to some propositions which are taken to be basic. (Controversy begins only when we ask about the status of these basic propositions.) Another example is his definition of "moral" as "the term or concept which refers to the keeping or violating of customs considered socially important—important in the mutual relations between man and man and between a man and his community" (p. 62). Few moral philosophers would dispute this so long as "socially important" is left as vague as it is here: Hartland-Swann rejects any more specific interpretation such as Toulmin's (or Hobbes') "harmonizing people's actions".

This preliminary analysis is well done, and should be useful to students. Hartland-Swann does, however, sometimes seem to think that he has solved a problem when he has merely made it possible to state it clearly.

Secondly, while agreeing with the general position of such writers as Hare or Nowell-Smith, Hartland-Swann differs from them in some relatively minor, but still important, points. He distinguishes sharply between "E-terms" (evaluative words, like "good") and "P-terms" (prescriptive ones, like "ought") and insists that E-terms do not "entail imperatives": to commend something or someone for having certain qualities need not imply that anyone is being admonished either to choose that thing or to imitate that person. And he attacks what he calls "the dogma of universalizability"; though his objections do not really go very far.

One of his points is that the universalization criterion does not enable us to distinguish the moral from the non-moral, since non-moral rules, too, are often universalizable. But, so far as I know, no one has denied this: the usual assertion is that all moral rules are universalizable, not that all universalizable rules are moral. Again, Hartland-Swann points out that, when his maiden aunt says "You ought to pay more attention to your health", she is not concerned with the health of other people's nephews. But he admits that there is an *implicit* generalization here; his point is just that its implicitness has been "insufficiently emphasized".

Neither of these objections, then, is very damaging to the "dogma of universalizability"; but, if Hartland-Swann had been prepared to go a little deeper, they might have led him to more profound objections. The first point might have made him ask whether there are any rules at all, either moral or non-moral, which are *not* universalizable; it is at least arguable that there is none. The second point might have led him to elaborate the

distinction between exhorting everyone (in the same circumstances) to do the same as you, and implying that it would be reasonable for them to do the same as you. This is a distinction which can hardly be made so long as moral terms are thought of as imperatives; but neglect of it does cause confusion: for example, between the sense in which egoism is universalizable and the sense in which it is not. (As an egoist, I don't want you, and so won't exhort you, to pursue your own interests to the exclusion of mine; but I may, in my private thoughts, think it reasonable that you should.)

What I have called his second task is presumably the one Hartland-Swann would himself think most important; it is his contribution to clarification of the new issues now being opened up. And he does make a contribution, even though his difference from other modern writers on ethics is usually one of emphasis. Even here, however, he is inclined to be superficial: as his treatment of universalizability indicates, he stops short just as he is getting on to the interesting questions.

Thirdly (and this brings me back to my main theme) Hartland-Swann gives us a trenchant, if again rather superficial, defence of subjectivism.

Consider the following passage:

"We are now in a position to deal with some familiar queries raised by moral philosophers. First of all we have the old favourite 'In what consists the rightness of an action?', or its variant 'What makes an action right?'; and then there is that portentous teaser 'What makes right actions right?'.

"The answer to the first query runs as follows. Action X is right if either (a) it is an action (or member of a class of actions) which ought to be performed in the opinion of the majority in any given community, i.e. if it conforms to an 'ought' principle to which the majority subscribe, or (b) it is an action (or member of a class of actions) which an individual prescribes, with or without majority concurrence, should be performed. This explains how individuals can differ from the majority in any given community, or how one community can differ from another regarding the rightness of actions. The original question, so dear to the hearts of many moral theorists, was misleading to the extent that it seemed to imply that certain actions can be 'right in themselves' irrespective of human subscription—whereas this, as we can now see, is a myth. I may regard certain actions as right which my community also regards; but I may also regard certain actions as right which my community regards as wrong. But in

any case, what makes an action right is that it should be *prescribed* by someone—and nothing else can do the trick.

“This clarification enables us to see that the second question—namely, ‘What makes a right action right?’, is, if not a spurious, at least a curious question; for it is tantamount to asking ‘What makes an action that is prescribed prescribed?’. In other words, the information which this question seeks to elicit—though those who asked it had something very different in mind—is what it is that makes individuals or communities prescribe that this or that ought to be done. And to answer this we need, not a philosopher, but a sociologist” (pp. 118-119).

This is a well-worn traditional position. The only thing that is novel here is that Hartland-Swann presents the position as if it were new, and as if, moreover, there could be no argument about its soundness once it is stated clearly. Yet the modern arguments in support of it are not essentially different from the traditional ones.

The traditional naturalist position may be put like this: A moral statement such as “X is good”, it is asserted, is true if:

- (1) X has certain natural characteristics;
- (2) These characteristics evoke certain feelings (pro-attitudes, as they would now be called) in the speaker and consequently (human beings being alike in this respect) in all or most men.

Now it is certainly possible to raise questions about the exact relation of “X is good” to the facts asserted in (1) and (2). It does not simply state them. There is good reason for saying that (1) is “contextually implied” rather than stated and that (2) is not stated but the attitude it refers to expressed. Modern writers have done a service in pointing this out. Moreover, it is more than doubtful whether the attitude expressed is in fact invariably, or even usually, one shared by all or most men. It is here that subjectivism differs from naturalism. But, when this has been said, there is really little difference between the naturalist analysis of moral statements and (say) Hartland-Swann’s. (He, incidentally, seems to think that the naturalists regarded moral statements as equivalent to (1) by itself; but this is surely a mistaken view, since it renders pointless the whole eighteenth century controversy about feeling and reason.)

This position has traditionally been defended by two main arguments, which I shall call the metaphysical and (not very happily) the logico-psychological argument respectively. The metaphysical argument can be elaborated in various ways, but

it amounts to a simple assertion of empiricism, and a refusal to accept the existence of non-empirical entities. The logico-psychological argument is that, even if we did admit a special class of moral ("non-natural") qualities or relations, they could not provide us with a reason for acting in the absence of some feeling (a "pro-attitude") directed towards those qualities or relations. My realisation that daffodils are yellow does not furnish me with a reason for growing them, unless I have a pro-attitude towards yellow things; and this would apply to a "non-natural quality" as much as to a natural one, like yellow. Consequently (1) and (2) between them, it is maintained, account for all the facts about moral judgments, without introducing any entities except the natural characteristics of objects, on the one hand, and human feelings on the other.

The logico-psychological argument is stated quite clearly by Hutcheson in his reply to Balguy, who had accused him of reducing moral judgment to "blind impulse". This analysis of morality, Balguy had added, degraded both man and God; for on Hutcheson's view God could have no reason for endowing man with, say, a disposition to approve of kindness rather than cruelty, except that he himself happened to have the same disposition (the same blind impulse). But it would be meaningless, on Hutcheson's view, to call such a disposition a perfection either in man or God.

Hutcheson, in his reply, makes two main points. First, he says, when we talk of an action done from blind impulse we usually mean one whose consequences are neither foreseen nor desired by the person acting. Moral dispositions are not "blind" in this sense. But if by "blind impulse" is meant a desire for which no further justification can be given, then there is no escape from blind impulse, either for man or God. The attempt to avoid it merely lands us in an infinite regress. "God's willing to regard the fitness of things must be a blind impulse, unless he has a prior reason why he wills what his understanding regards as fit, rather than as unfit; for his understanding represents both. And there must be a prior fitness or reasonableness that he should will what is fit, and a yet prior fitness that he should regard the fitness of willing what is fit, and so on." (*Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, Section 1, foot-note.) In Hartland-Swann's words, nothing but prescription *can* do the trick.

It is this argument, in its modern dress, that has convinced Ewing that there is no point in hanging on to "non-natural qualities". But he is still worried by Balguy's point: that, if the final justification for action is simply a pro-attitude that we happen

to have, then there can be no sense in which that attitude itself can be good or bad. Hutcheson is quite prepared to accept this conclusion. ("Every one judges the affections of others by his own sense . . . A sense approving benevolence would disapprove that temper, which a sense approving malice would delight in . . . We should no more call the moral sense morally good or evil, than we call the Sense of Tasting savoury or unsavoury, sweet or bitter." *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, Section 1.) Hartland-Swann also accepts it. "The morality of cow-treatment is quite different in India from what it is in Britain, and that of donkey-treatment quite different in Egypt from what it is in the United States of America. Nor is it easy to get people of another community to change their moral attitudes in regard to animals; for even if it can be shown that, say, treating a horse in this particular way makes it *suffer*, you may well find that relatively little importance is attached to the suffering of horses. All we can hope for, if we feel strongly that this or that sort of treatment of animals is 'wrong' (i.e. something which *we* think ought not to be tolerated), is to use persuasive definitions to bring round the other parties to our point of view" (p. 181).

It is just because he is unable to accept this that Ewing remains an objectivist. The final appeal, he thinks, is not to those attitudes we have, as a matter of fact, but to those we ought to have; and "ought" here is an irreducible moral concept. What Ewing in effect does is to replace the naturalist analysis of moral statements by the following:

A moral statement, like "X is good", is true if:

(1) X has certain natural characteristics;¹

(2A) These characteristics ought to evoke pro-attitudes in all men, whether they do or not.

(In fairness it should be said that this is my formulation of his position, not Ewing's own; but I do not think that he would object to it.)

In replacing (2) by (2A), Ewing seems to run foul of both the metaphysical and the logico-psychological arguments. (2) is an empirical statement; (2A) is not. We know what it means to say that I have a pro-attitude. But to say that I ought to have a pro-attitude which I do not have can only mean, according to Hutcheson, that such a pro-attitude will be to my interest, or that I have a further pro-attitude towards having it. It is clear,

¹"The factors which make an action right or wrong are the natural characteristics and relations it has, as being, e.g. motivated in a certain way and liable to produce certain effects."—p. 78.

however, that Ewing does not mean either of these. The only other possibility would seem to be that it means that having such a pro-attitude is itself a state of affairs which has the non-natural quality "good" or "right". And if this is what it means, it is not only an assertion about a non-empirical characteristic, but one that cannot provide a reason for action.

Ewing is prepared to admit that "ought" is "a non-empirical concept", though he denies that it refers to a non-empirical quality or relation. He defends non-empirical concepts by saying, in effect, that many other concepts, notably logical ones, do not directly refer to observables, but are not meaningless. This, incidentally, is the traditional anti-naturalist answer: it was argued at length by Richard Price. But the traditional view was that these concepts are concepts of non-empirical qualities and relations, grasped by "the reason" and not the senses. Ewing, influenced by recent work in moral philosophy, and by the logico-psychological argument, now thinks that it is unnecessary to assert this. He would replace it by the view that these concepts refer in some oblique way to what can be observed.

Putting his case in my terms rather than his, it is that this account enables him to meet both the metaphysical and the logico-psychological arguments. Non-empirical concepts are not metaphysically objectionable, even if non-empirical qualities and relations are. And, since these non-empirical moral concepts refer obliquely to pro-attitudes as well as to natural characteristics, they do provide reasons for acting.

Ewing's argument here depends on some considerations about truth. A true proposition is "made true" by the facts. To call it "true" is to say that it has *some* relation to those facts. To that extent Ewing accepts the correspondence theory. But this relation, he adds, cannot accurately be described as correspondence, even for straightforward descriptive statements. Even a statement like "the cat is on the mat" does not merely copy the state of affairs that makes it true. Other statements, like counterfactual conditionals, are, it is obvious, not made true by some "subsistent" hypothetical fact to which they correspond. What makes them true is the nature of ordinary existent (and not "subsistent") things, "which is such as to imply (not of course just 'materially', but causally, if not logically) that, if things had been different in way *a* they would have been different in way *b*. Thus . . . the nature of sky-scrapers is such as to imply the truth of the proposition that, if I had jumped from the top floor of the Woolworth Building in New York and my fall had not been broken, I should have been killed" (p. 45).

Similarly, Ewing argues, a value judgment may be made true by the facts without referring to a "non-natural" quality or relation. The naturalist is right in supposing that "you ought to do X" is made true by the natural characteristics of objects and by human attitudes. But he is wrong in supposing that it can be reduced without remainder to a series of statements about those characteristics and attitudes, just as it would be wrong to suppose that the counterfactual is precisely equivalent to a statement of the facts which make it true.

For an analysis of moral statements, non-natural concepts are needed as well; but these, Ewing argues, are metaphysically unobjectionable, because they do not involve unobservable *entities*. Moral statements are not statements about an odd, *sui generis* fact. They are, if you like, odd, *sui generis* statements about ordinary facts. But this is just to say, in modern idiom, that they have their own logic. Counterfactual conditionals are also *sui generis* statements about ordinary facts. There are no doubt problems about just how moral statements are related to the facts that make them true. But then there are similar problems about counterfactual conditionals, and even about descriptive statements. The problems are not the same in each case, because each kind of statement is "related to the real" in a different way. But there is no need to reject moral statements, or to reduce them to some other kind of statement, any more than we need reject counterfactual conditionals.

Ewing's line of argument may appear if we consider the following parallels:

(A) The cat-on-the-mat state of affairs:

- (a) justifies ("makes true") the statement "the cat is on the mat";
- (b) gives rise to the belief (an attitude of mind) that the cat is on the mat, a belief that is "expressed" by the statement;
- (c) justifies that belief.

(B) The state of affairs in which men have certain physiological characteristics, buildings have certain heights, etc.

- (a) justifies (makes true) the statement: "If a man had jumped from the Woolworth Building, he would have been killed";
- (b) gives rise to the belief in that statement;
- (c) justifies the belief in that statement.

- (C) The state of affairs in which X is an action intended to cause suffering
- (a) justifies ("makes true") the statement "X is wrong" (or "one ought not to do X");
 - (b) gives rise to an anti-attitude to X, which is "expressed" by the statement;
 - (c) justifies an anti-attitude to X.

It is because of the parallel between A(a) and C(a) that Ewing speaks of the relation between an attitude and its object and that between a statement and its referent in the same breath. The same state of affairs or set of facts, he seems to think, may make more than one kind of statement true. The set of facts about human physiology and heights makes true, not only the straightforward descriptive statements which assert those facts, but also the counterfactual conditional statement in B(a). Similarly, he would say, the state of affairs referred to in C may make true, not only the straightforward descriptive statement recording it, but also the statement that one ought to have an anti-attitude towards that state of affairs or one of its components.

We need not suppose that the counterfactual conditional is made true by some kind of ghostly subsistent hypothetical fact; it has the same referent as the descriptive statement. The difference lies, not in the referent, but in the referring relation itself, which is somehow different (though we may not be able to say just how it is different). Similarly, we need not suppose that the moral statement has a special kind of referent, a non-natural quality or relation. It has the same referent as the descriptive statement (the state of affairs which evokes the anti-attitude) but refers to it in a different way.

Moreover, states of affairs give rise, not only to statements about them, but to beliefs, which are states of mind. A belief is justified (a true belief) when the statement which expresses it is made true by the state of affairs which causes it. Similarly, states of affairs give rise to other states of mind as well as beliefs, such as pro- or anti-attitudes. These are justified (fitting attitudes) when the moral statements which express them are made true by the states of affairs which cause them.

That is Ewing's position, so far as I have understood him. I do not find it easy to comment on it, because there are so many different strands in the argument. But let us consider, first, the point about counterfactuals.

With a straightforward descriptive statement the referent is also the evidence for it. This seems to have misled Ewing into

confusing the referents of counterfactuals with the evidence for them. There are, however, two separate questions that may be asked about counterfactuals. One is: What evidence supports the assertion that, if Ewing had jumped from the Woolworth Building, he would have been killed? (What facts "make it true"?) The other is: How is a counterfactual conditional, which by hypothesis refers to something that could not be observed, since it didn't happen, related to the kind of thing that could be observed? What is the relation between: "If Ewing had jumped he would have been killed" and such observation-statements as "Ewing jumped and was killed"?

There are, then, two quite separate problems about counterfactuals. There is a problem about evidence: whether the evidence on which we do assert counterfactuals may be said to warrant them. What is involved here is, at least in part, the problem of induction. Secondly, there is a problem about reference.

Similarly, there are two quite separate problems about moral statements. The ground on which we say that X is wrong commonly is some such statement as "X is intended to cause suffering". There is certainly a problem about the validity of this inference, though it is not the problem of induction. But there is also another, different problem. What is the relation between "I have an anti-attitude to actions which are intended to cause human suffering" and "I ought to have an anti-attitude towards actions which are intended to cause human suffering"?

It is important to distinguish these problems, if only because it is the problem about evidence that gives rise to the logico-psychological argument and the problem about reference that gives rise to the metaphysical argument. Let us consider whether Ewing's analogy with counterfactuals does enable him to meet each of these.

Ewing says that it is "the nature of skyscrapers" that justifies the assertion of the counterfactual conditional: i.e. a statement embodying a non-empirical concept. Similarly, he argues, the nature of some states of affairs may justify the assertion that we ought to have a pro-attitude towards them: another statement embodying a non-empirical concept. But, whatever force this may have against the metaphysical argument, it has none against the logico-psychological one. For, even if we can argue from "X has characteristic C" to "I ought to have a pro-attitude towards X", this second statement does not provide me with a reason for acting unless it asserts that I have an actual pro-attitude.

The logico-psychological argument is that a descriptive state-

ment about the characteristics of objects, states of affairs, states of mind, etc., does not provide a reason for action, whether the characteristics described are natural or non-natural. In terms of the naturalist analysis of moral statements (1) (X has certain natural characteristics) needs to be supplemented by (2) (These characteristics evoke a pro-attitude). Now it is clear that (2A) (These characteristics ought to evoke a pro-attitude) Ewing's substitute for (2), will not supplement (1) in the right way. Only an attitude that I actually have will do the trick, not one that I ought to have, however "ought" is "related to the real"—unless indeed "I ought to have a pro-attitude" is just a way of saying that I have a pro-attitude towards having a pro-attitude. Ewing seems to think that he has met the objection by including a reference to pro-attitudes in his definition of "good" ("X is good = One ought to have a pro-attitude towards X") but this is not enough.

The parallel with counterfactuals does nothing to help here, because, whatever problems there may be about inferring a counterfactual from the factual statements that are evidence for it, this particular problem does not arise. Ewing has not, then, met the logico-psychological argument; and yet it is this argument that he is expressly concerned with.

Now take the problem about reference. One way of dealing with it is to say that "If Ewing had jumped, etc." is just a way of saying that "Ewing jumped from the Woolworth Building" implies ("causally if not logically") "Ewing was killed". In other words, counterfactuals involve straightforward empirical assertions plus causal implication. Since talk of causal *implication* suggests a logical relation between propositions, and Ewing makes a good deal of the point that logical concepts are "non-natural", he may regard causation as a non-natural concept. He may, then, want to give a parallel analysis of "One ought to have a pro-attitude to X". He may want to say that it refers to a straightforward empirical judgment ("I have a pro-attitude to X") plus the non-natural concept of obligation. And he might then argue that there is no more difficulty about the meaning of moral statements than about the meaning of counterfactuals, and no more need to boggle at the one than at the other. Though he does not make it explicit, he does seem to have some argument of this sort in mind.

Obligation, however, can hardly be taken as a logical relation between propositions. And if it is said that causation, too, is a relation between events and not between propositions, then one must ask what exactly is meant by calling it a non-natural concept.

To call it this might be a way of making Price's point that causation involves some reference to a non-empirical, unobservable relation. But Ewing does not want to say this, since he has now repudiated non-natural relations. If, on the other hand, he means that causation can be adequately accounted for in terms of what we can observe, he would need to give us a similar account of obligation. But he specifically says that "ought" is an unanalysable non-natural concept. It is still quite obscure what a non-natural concept is, or how it is "related to the real". Ewing evades this question, partly because he confuses the problem about reference with the quite different problem about evidence; and partly because he is content to say that the relation between (e.g.) logical concepts and "the real", and even the relation between a descriptive statement and what it describes, is also obscure. The short answer to this is that two obscurities do not make a clarity. He does not claim that there is one and the same obscure relation involved here. On the contrary, he insists that these different types of concept are related to reality in different ways. While it is true that the metaphysical argument is weakened if any exceptions are admitted, it is still hardly adequate to say that, because we do not fully understand one relation, we are bound to admit the existence of another which we understand even less.

The analogy with counterfactuals, then, does not enable Ewing to meet either of the two traditional naturalist arguments. Let us now consider the other main strand in his argument: the point about belief.

A state of affairs may cause a belief; but the belief is not justified unless the statement that expresses the belief is true. Similarly, Ewing says, a state of affairs causes a pro-attitude, but the attitude is not justified unless the statement that expresses the attitude is true.

This parallel breaks down on examination. The statement that expresses the belief is not (e.g.) "I believe that the cat is on the mat" but just "The cat is on the mat". Similarly, according to Ewing, the statement that expresses the attitude is not "I have a pro-attitude to X" but "X is good" (or "right"). But he also says that "X is good" is equivalent to "I ought to have a pro-attitude to X". And (whatever "ought" means) this is a statement about the attitude, and not about the object of the attitude. "The cat is on the mat", on the other hand, is not a statement about the belief, but about the object of the belief.

Again, "The cat is on the mat" may be said to express a belief in two different senses: it tells us what the belief is, and its utterance implies ("contextually") that the speaker holds this

belief. But "One ought to have a pro-attitude to X" does not tell us what the pro-attitude is, nor does its utterance imply that the speaker has this pro-attitude. It might indeed imply that the speaker has a pro-attitude towards having this pro-attitude to X, but Ewing would resist this interpretation of "ought". If it is true that "X is good" expresses a pro-attitude, then it seems unlikely that "X is good" is equivalent to "One ought to have a pro-attitude to X".

Finally, and chiefly: The truth of a descriptive statement justifies the corresponding belief only because we have a **pro-attitude** towards believing true statements, and an **anti-attitude** towards believing false statements. Ewing wants to say that "One ought to believe a true statement" involves another non-natural concept, the "ought of rationality", which, he says, is distinct from the "moral ought". But a naturalist would **certainly** say that we can analyse this statement either as a hypothetical imperative (believing false statements will get us into trouble in various ways) or as the expression of a pro-attitude that we happen to have.

This discussion of Ewing's position may be summarised in this way:

Ewing draws a parallel between:

(A) If p, then "p" is true

= p makes "p" true

= p is a reason for believing that "p" is true (justifies belief in "p");

(B) If p, then A (an attitude) is fitting

= p makes A fitting

= p is a reason for believing that A is fitting.

But:

(1) The relation between an attitude and its object is different from the relation between a statement and its referent. One must distinguish between the characteristics of p that make A a fitting attitude, and the characteristics of that attitude to which the term "fitting" refers.

(2) It is incorrect to say that "p is a reason for believing that 'p'" is equivalent to "p makes 'p' true". That a statement is true is only a reason to believe it if one has a pro-attitude to believing true statements. This has a bearing on the logico-psychological argument, which insists that no characteristic of p can, apart from some prior attitude, be a reason for doing anything about p.

Hartland-Swann is, I would suggest, right in saying that recent moral philosophy supports subjectivism, but wrong in supposing that it has departed very far from the traditional arguments; and Ewing is, it seems to me, mistaken in supposing that recent moral philosophy has shown him how to meet those arguments.

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REVIEWS

THE PROBLEMS OF PERCEPTION. By R. J. Hirst. London, Allen & Unwin, 1959. x, 330 p. 30s. (U.K.).

Hirst has many reasons for not being able to accept the common-sense theory of perception in its entirety. "One of the most intractable difficulties" is the fact that perceiving involves a causal process (*vide* p. 22). It is difficult to understand why the existence of "the causal process" is incompatible with common-sense. The facts merely assert the necessity of certain conditions for perceiving, conditions without which perceiving does not take place: in seeing, for instance, one condition is the passage of light from the object to the eye and the other condition is the activation of the *whole* sense-apparatus from receptors in the retina to nerve-endings in the brain. The activation of a part of the sense-organ is not sufficient, for we are told that if the "nerve-impulses", as the physiologist calls them, are interrupted in their course from receptor to ending, perception does not take place. The common-sense assumptions, according to Hirst, are that we all live in one common world of material things (the publicity assumption), and that in perceiving we are directly confronted with material things and their characteristics (the immediacy assumption). That the passage of light from object to eye and the activation of the whole sense-organ are necessary for seeing things is not contradictory of the notion that we see material things and see them directly.

What bothers Hirst, however, is not that "the causal process" is *necessary* for perceiving but that "the later stages of it seem to be a *sufficient* condition of perceiving" (p. 22): it is this fact, not the causal process as such, that produces the real difficulty. Says Hirst, "The latest stages alone of the causal process may produce the same results in sensation as when the process starts with the external object" (p. 23). Those who maintain that the activation of a part of the sense-organ alone is a sufficient condition for perceiving are committed to the fantastic thesis that even in the utter absence of light we can, for instance, see a brightly coloured red book. And we can see this object even when such an object does not exist! What is needed for such a perception is solely that our optic nerve be stimulated electrically in a certain manner.

Hirst admits that the perceptions produced by electrical stimulation of the cortex are vague but explains this as being entirely due to the crudity of the stimulus. Borrowing, I believe, from Adrian's account of the subject, he says "The sensation thus

caused is unlike the normal tactile sensation and is difficult to describe; but the difference would seem to be adequately accounted for by the difference between direct electrical stimulation (excitation of a large group of cells at a fixed frequency) and the normal impulses from the skin (trains of impulses rising and falling in frequency and confined to fewer nerve endings). Sensations of colour and sound from direct stimulation are similarly vague owing to the unavoidable crudity of the stimulus." Hirst and modern neurologists assume qualitative similarity between normal perception and the sensation aroused by electrical stimulation of the cortex. To the observer these experiences are different, as the neurologist himself reports, but the latter *interprets* this as a difference of crudity and clarity only, though it is doubtful whether this is the description given by the observers themselves. There are crude and vague perceptions too obtained by the normal means—we often see vague objects, like wisps of smoke—and are these not qualitatively different from the sensations induced by direct cortical stimulation? Hirst says, himself providing the answer to the problem, that the fact that cortical activity produces sensations similar to perceiving can be made to "explain dreams, hallucinations and mental images" (p. 148). Mental imagery, then, and not perception is what is produced by electrical stimulation of the cortex, and in normal circumstances (i.e. when we are not asleep or when our powers of discrimination are not impaired by emotion) we do distinguish between perceived objects and mental imagery.

Hirst's mistake is exactly that of the modern physiologist who believes that perceiving can be fully explained by the pattern of neurological activity alone: what we perceive, the object of our perception, is dependent upon the specific pattern of neurological activity; we see a book *because* there is a specific cortical activity (a cortical 'map' of a book) in our brain. This theory, despite the inevitable vision it raises of the hobgoblin in the brain, is still accepted by most neurologists. On the basis of this they try in vain to discover the connection between cortical activity and perception and are greatly puzzled by the impossible problem of the transition from physical to mental activity.

The problem arises only because we think of the perception as an effect of the specific cortical pattern of activity: we relate the former to the latter as effect to cause. This is a mistake. A 'cortical map' of a book in our brain is not the cause of our seeing a book: rather, the book that we see is the cause of such a cortical map; it is the external object that causes the cortical activity and explains the specific pattern it takes. It is not being

denied that for perception we need the activation of our sense-organs (it is in this sense that cortical activity can be considered a cause of our perception) but we do not need the activation of them in *specific* ways, though their activation in a manner roughly described thus does in fact occur. How could it be otherwise? The sensory receptors and the nerve paths are physical objects and the law of cause and effect which applies universally in other fields applies here too without exception. In actual fact, however, the cortical activity is never so specific as the external object that causes it. It is conceded, for instance, that there is nothing in the cortical activity or 'the map' which could correspond to "qualities such as colour, warmth or sound" (p. 164) and yet these qualities are also perceived. (This fact, instead of serving Hirst as a disproof of his thesis, is used by him as an argument that colour, warmth and sound are not real qualities of things.) The only real variable seems spatial and even the spatial patterns in the cortex, regarded as reproductions of the object, are so distorted and transformed that 'maps' is a euphemism when applied to them. Hirst admits, quoting Russell Brain, that "when we perceive a two-dimensional circle we do so by means of an activity in the brain which is halved, reduplicated, transposed, inverted, distorted and three-dimensional" (p. 146). The attempt to explain perceiving in terms of the specific pattern of our cortical activity is clearly a false path of inquiry. *What* we perceive when we use our sense-organs, i.e. when patterns of cortical activity occur, is dependent upon what there is for us to perceive: the nature of our perception is explained solely in terms of the objects that exist in the world.

Another reason Hirst has for not accepting common-sense wholeheartedly is his belief that psychological processes, like attention, the influence of learning and previous experience, contradict its "immediacy assumption"! This is the least clear of Hirst's theses, for we are never sure whether he is attacking only sense-data theory here: he seems to suppose, however, that common-sense too claims for perception an always excellent immediate awareness and he speaks of "a possible clash" between the common-sense recognition that perceiving can vary in quality and its immediacy hypothesis (p. 303). It is doubtful whether common-sense is committed, like the sense-data theory, to the thesis that perception always involves an *excellent* immediate awareness. Hirst, when he first attacks the sense-data theorists, maintains that the phenomena of attention are inexplicable from their point of view. Changes in attention, he says, "feel like changes in the *mode*, not the object of apprehension" (p. 52). He concedes that "on the common-sense view there is no diffi-

culty": by an effort of attention our perception "changes in quality from an inattentive glance to a careful and exact scrutiny". On the basis of this concession it is difficult to understand why Hirst is later doubtful whether psychological processes are compatible with common-sense. Processes such as attention, stereoscopic vision, the influence of learning, figure-ground phenomena do affect perception, but the fact, to put it in Hirst's terminology, that modifications are produced by these processes on the original sentence is not incompatible with common-sense: it is only when "the percepta" are contradictory with one another that we get any threat to common-sense. With cases of perceptions that appear contradictory we move into the field of illusion and the relativity of perception: here the perceptions are modified not by psychological processes mainly but by changes in the physical or physiological conditions of perceiving.

The difficulties raised by the so-called illusions and the relativity of perception are the only serious problems for common-sense. Hirst, like most other philosophers, tries to deal with these problems as though they were one problem. Each problem of illusion is distinct and has to be dealt with separately. The problem for common-sense is to reconcile the information given us by the perception of the object under different conditions with the notion that it is one *non-contradictory* object we see every time. This is by no means an easy task with many of the illusions, but with regard to four of the most intractable illusions, namely, reflections, refractions, double vision and the elliptical penny, solutions have in my opinion been reached.¹

Hirst is clearly against the arguments used by sense-data theorists to solve these problems. The happiest portions of his book are his attacks on sense-data theory. He shows that the theory is a false inference from the facts of illusion and that it creates for itself more problems than it solves. Yet he is of the view that common-sense too, which I believe is the only logical alternative to sense-data theory, cannot solve the problems of illusion. We shall have to give up the immediacy assumption of common-sense, says Hirst, in order to deal with these problems. Rejecting the immediacy assumption but retaining the publicity assumption, Hirst tries to solve the problems of perception. With a vague rhetoric about "science" and "measurement", Hirst tries to justify the traditional distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which is a partial consequence of rejecting the immediacy

¹ *Vide* articles by this reviewer in this *Journal*, December, 1957, and August, 1959, on the problems of reflection, double-vision and refraction and the October, 1959, issue of *Philosophy* for solution to the problem of the "elliptical penny".

assumption of common-sense. Supposing some kind of correspondence between the object *qua* content of perceptual consciousness and the object *qua* physical object and cause (p. 295), Hirst now enters into the labyrinth of Representative Theory in order to search for his solutions, to be lost for ever within. "The danger of the supposition of private objects of awareness has been one of the recurrent themes of this book" (p. 279), says Hirst, but it seems to me that despite his dogged efforts to resist the supposition Hirst finally succumbs. His distinction between perceptual consciousness and perception, his qualification of the former as adverbial, his distinction of primary and secondary qualities, and finally his theory of correspondence between percept and object—all these surely imply private objects of awareness. Hirst's brilliant arguments against sense-data theory are vitiated by his acceptance of the Representative theory, which cannot do without the term 'sense-data' or some equivalent of it.

Incidentally, Hirst's criticism of the linguistic treatment of perceptual problems is instructive and entertaining (*vide* chapter 5, particularly pp. 116 and 117). He is to be complimented for his stout defence of traditional methods of solving philosophical problems. His account of the mind-body problem too is interesting, but it is doubtful whether this topic is directly relevant to the problem of perception as such.

ARTHADEVA.

PHILOSOPHY AND ARGUMENT. By Henry W. Johnstone Jr. Pennsylvania University Press, 1959. 137 p. \$4.00.

When two scientists disagree the issue between them is, in general, settled by the facts; when two philosophers disagree there are no relevant facts which could conceivably settle the issue between them since each is claiming to take into account all facts. This is a simplification of Mr. Johnstone's position, but it expresses the basic worry which troubles him; and it leads him to ask how we can decide the correctness or otherwise of a philosophical thesis. His conclusion is that the "truth" of philosophical statements is "relative to argument", and this in turn leads him to discuss the role of argument in philosophy.

What he means by the truth of a statement being relative to argument is most clearly stated early in the book (p. 23). He there says, "the truth of any statement is *relative to argument* when it is impossible to think of the statement as true without at the same time thinking of an argument in its favour". So much depends on this conception, however, that one might reasonably

expect some refinement of the criterion associated with it, but no attempt is made to explain how the test is to be applied. Is it impossible, for example, to think of the statement 'There are nine unused cheques in my cheque book' as true without at the same time thinking of an argument in its favour? Most commonly one would argue for its truth—there were ten yesterday and I have just drawn one in favour of Mrs. Jones. Or even if one simply counts them, the counting is being used as a justification and in some sense an argument. But, of course, here one is trying to establish or justify the statement; and this is not, it seems, Mr. Johnstone's point. He wants to know if we can *think* of the statement's being true without using an argument. In what sense 'think', however? Not, surely, 'entertain' or 'idly speculate'; for this would be possible for all statements and none would qualify as being relative to argument.

One is left with the uneasy feeling that this is an all-or-nothing principle, though it is clear that Johnstone does not think so. For him, most scientific statements are not relative to argument. In fact, he says, "there are scientific propositions", *i.e.* statements which are true or false independently of the argument which supports them. This is so also of statements in the formal sciences (mathematics and logic) in spite of the emphasis which mathematicians place on proof-making. Thus (p. 24), "the truth of a theorem is not relative to the argument or proof that leads to its assertion"; indeed, "one may not only think of such a theorem as true, but even know perfectly well that it is true, without having the slightest idea what argument leads to its establishment".

There are, therefore, scientific facts and, presumably, mathematical ones. And argument in both the practical and formal sciences is a means to an end, an instrument which we use in our attempts to discover the independent truths, not an end in itself. There are, however, no facts peculiar to philosophy; there is no independent check which will enable us conclusively to accept or reject philosophical statements. "Facts are facts and . . . whoever wants the facts should look to science" (p. 22).

Yet one has only to reflect that the choice between the Euclidean and a non-Euclidean geometry, for example, is a choice between *techniques*, to realise that mathematical "facts" are not just "there" to be discovered. It is the way we measure, and the assumptions we make about our measuring instruments, rather than the facts of space, which justify our assertion that the three angles of a triangle do or do not make 180° , or that space is or is not curved; and these assumptions are methodological. Similar remarks, too, can be made of many of the "facts" of the practical sciences.

Johnstone does indeed concede that argument may not play a simple fact-finding role in the more theoretical reaches of science, but this means that "science, to the extent that it exhibits these characteristics, has a philosophical ingredient" (p. 22). One wonders, however, to what extent science does not exhibit such characteristics.

It may seem unfair to lay so much stress on the assumptions made at the beginning of the book, especially since the author anticipates the obvious objections by remarking that he is not writing a philosophy of science and does not wish to be judged as doing so. Yet these assumptions are important, for they constitute the *raison d'être* of the book. Scientists can settle their differences by taking a look, philosophers can't; so how do philosophers arrive at the truth? To set the scene in this way is, one feels, to overlook many facts about science and mathematics, facts which no philosopher can ignore; facts, indeed, peculiar to philosophy.

Given the setting, however, the rest follows naturally. Thus, since the characteristic of a philosophical statement is that its truth is relative to argument, it has to be explained what is meant by 'truth' in this context. For it is not simply that philosophical truths are incapable of absolute demonstration; this much can be said of the truths of the non-formal sciences. Rather is it that "absolute truth in philosophy cannot even operate as an ideal goal" (p. 25) whereas in science it can and does so operate. What then do we mean by philosophical truth? Johnstone answers this by saying that a true philosophical statement is one which is "true to its problem" (p. 38). That is, the statement "claims to be a true attempt to solve a problem". As he says, this looks like the *reductio ad absurdum* of philosophy. For "two contrary statements might both be true to the same problem".

There are, however, restraints. True, we are not restrained by the facts, as scientists are, but we are restrained by the form and type of argument which we use to establish philosophical statements. In particular our arguments must be valid. This would be an unsurprising conclusion if Johnstone meant 'formally valid', but he does not. Rather he intends 'valid' in the sense in which it occurs in 'valid criticism'. Hence an argument is valid if it is in some sense relevant or appropriate to the point at issue.

It is no accident that 'valid' is taken in the sense in which it occurs in 'valid criticism'. For if the truth of a philosophical statement is not relative to objective facts but to the argument which establishes it, then there can be no *argumentum ad rem* in philosophy. We are therefore left with *argumenta ad hominem*

and a valid argument of this type is one which establishes that the thesis of one's opponent defeats its own purpose in terms of the obligations and commitments implicit in it (p. 82). Much of the book is therefore devoted to an analysis and classification of such arguments.

Yet even if one accepted that philosophy has a dialectical history, or even that it is dialectical in character, one would nevertheless hesitate to say that it *is* dialectical controversy. But this seems to be the upshot of Johnstone's thesis. For the truth of a philosophical statement, even its meaning (p. 40), is inseparable from the argument which supports it; and the argument is good, the statement true, in so far as it is a successful attempt to make or meet a point of criticism.

But suppose two philosophers each make the statement 'The world is everything that is the case', one as a flat assertion, the other by employing a valid *argumentum ad hominem* in a dialectical context. Is the statement when uttered by the first neither true nor false, when uttered by the second true? It is hard to see how the *Tractatus* could stand as a work of philosophy on Johnstone's account; few, if any, of the arguments in it are addressed *ad hominem*. It is no doubt true that Wittgenstein wrote the book because he had rejected the idealism of the day, and true also that many of the arguments would stand to some extent as a refutation of idealism, but this is not the measure of its value. And even the explicit criticisms of idealism which are to be found in Russell, for example, are not directed *ad hominem*. For the most telling criticism is that the idealists assume the correctness of the traditional logic and that this assumption is *mistaken*. It is not, that is to say, that the idealists defeat their own purpose but that they exploit a *false* account of logic. Whether or not this is a just criticism is beside the point here; what matters is that facts about logic and language, and (Russell thought) facts about the world, were used with devastating success to overthrow a system which ignored them.

In general, Mr. Johnstone seems to me to overlook three important points. The first is that look-and-see facts are not the only facts; the second is that since look-and-see facts often depend on methodological principles and assumptions, they are not always a final court of appeal; and the third is that, though it may be true to say that philosophers claim to be taking into account all facts, this is not to say that they are ever successful. Hence this claim may be, and often is, challenged; one points to facts which have been overlooked. To do so, however, is not to show that one's opponent is defeating his own purpose—except in the very general sense that it was his purpose to give a complete account and he has failed to do so.

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Mention in this list neither precludes nor guarantees later review.)

ADAMS, E. M. *Ethical naturalism and the modern world-view*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1960. xii, 229 p. \$6.

Divides naturalists into three classes: "classical naturalists, who hold that ethical sentences have cognitive meaning and truth values but are translatable into the language of science; emotive naturalists, who hold that ethical sentences are not cognitively meaningful . . . ; and 'good reasons', or logical naturalists, who hold that ethical sentences are meaningful—although not true or false—but justified or not in terms of good reasons or the lack of them." Examines each form in turn and finds against all of them.

ADLER, Joshua. *Philosophy of Judaism*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. 160 p. \$3.

ALBERT, Ethel M., and KLUCKHOHN, Clyde, eds. *A selected bibliography on values, ethics and esthetics in the behavioural sciences and philosophy, 1920-1958*. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1959. xviii, 340 p. \$7.50.

A list of about 2,000 books and articles, with brief descriptive annotations, not always accurate. The emphasis is sociological.

BECK, Lewis White. *A commentary on Kant's Critique of practical reason*. University of Chicago Press, 1960; distributed by Cambridge University Press. xvi, 308 p. £2/8/- (U.K.).

An exposition of Kant's moral theory and of its place in his philosophy as a whole.

BERGMAN, S. H., ed. *Studies in philosophy (Scripta Hierosolymitana: Publications of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, vol. vi)*. Jerusalem, Magnes Press, Hebrew University; distributed by Oxford University Press, 1960. 315 p. Price not given. Paper covers.

Six studies by philosophers of the Hebrew University, on such subjects as existentialism, Collingwood, Kant, Aristotle, Maimon, Hegel, and Abu'l-Barakat Al-Baghdadi.

BRANDT, Richard B. *Ethical theory; the problems of normative and critical ethics*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall. xiii, 538 p. \$6.75.

A comprehensive text-book covering both the analysis of moral reasoning and the ontological status and justification of moral beliefs.

DE KONINCK, Charles. *The hollow universe*. Oxford University Press. 1960. xii, 127 p. 20s. 9d. (Australian).

Current philosophy of science gives us a hollow mathematics, manipulating variables without regard to their application, a hollow physics, content with operational definitions which tell us how things are measured, not what they are, and a lifeless biology, which ignores

final causes. "Under the twinkle of a fading star, Hollow Men rejoice at a hollow world of their own making" (p. 78). It is implied that the Hollow Men need to be stuffed with theology.

DEWEY, John. On experience, nature and freedom; representative selections edited, with an introduction, by Richard J. Bernstein, New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1960. 1, 293 p. \$1.35 (paper covers).

Selections, mainly articles, intended to provide a general introduction to Dewey's philosophy and "arranged so as to lead the reader from the more intimate and concrete to the more comprehensive features of Dewey's thought".

DUTT, K. Guru. Existentialism and Indian thought. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. iv, 92 p. \$2.75.

FARBER, Marvin. Naturalism and subjectivism. Springfield, Ill., Charles C. Thomas, 1959. xvi, 389 p. £3/16/- (U.K.).

Chiefly a critical examination of phenomenology, which the author sees as the successor of idealism and as fundamentally opposed to naturalism ("the philosophical generalization of science"). Argues for a "methodological pluralism" (within which phenomenology would have its place as "a descriptive discipline solely") and "an ontological monism", which "recognises only one kind of being in the last resort, namely, physical events".

GRAVE, S. A. The Scottish philosophy of common sense. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960. 262 p. 59s. 3d. (Australian).

Both an exposition of the commonsense reply to Hume put forward by Reid and his school and a discussion of the general validity of an appeal to common sense as an argument against scepticism.

GREENWOOD, David. The nature of science, and other essays. New York, Philosophical Library, 1959. xiv, 95 p. \$3.75.

"Five essays in the general area of logic and mathematics as applied to science", on such topics as quantitative inductive procedures, causality and the counterfactual conditional, and real numbers.

HEGEL, G. F. Hegel highlights: an annotated selection, [edited by] Wanda Orynski. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. xxii, 361 p. \$4.75.

HELMER, Olaf, and RESCHER, Nicholas. On the epistemology of the inexact sciences. (U.S. Air Force Project Rand.) Santa Monica, Cal., Rand Corporation, 1960. viii, 40 p. Price not given. Paper covers.

"While explanation and prediction have the same structure in the exact sciences, this is not so in the inexact sciences", which "include applied sciences such as engineering or medicine as well as most of the social sciences".

HOCK, Alfred. Reason and genius: studies in their origin. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. iv, 138 p. \$3.75.

Genius is not hereditary, and we can learn how to produce it.

KAUFMAN, Gordon D. *Relativism, knowledge and faith*. University of Chicago Press, 1960. xiii, 141 p. £3/15/3 (Australian).

Attacks cultural relativism—the view “that truth and values are relative to the culture in which they are found”—on both philosophical and theological grounds.

KEDOURIE, Elie. *Nationalism*. London, Hutchinson, 1960. 151 p. 21s. (U.K.).

Analyses and discusses the current belief “that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government”.

KING, Peter D. *The principle of truth*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. x, 110 p. \$3.75.

A collection of such platitudes as that “men should honour beauty and truth”, presented as “a scientific foundation of society”. The author tells us that the reception of this book will be “a measure of our stage of emotional growth”.

PAPPE, H. O. *John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor myth*. (Australian National University Social Science Monograph 19.) Melbourne University Press on behalf of Australian National University, 1960. ix, 51 p. 9s. 6d. (Australian) (paper covers).

“This short study is supposed to be read as a companion volume to established authorities such as Hayek and Packe. . . . My intention has been . . . to dispel a myth which . . . threatens to distort our image of Mill’s personality . . . [and which] could arise only from a misinterpretation of Mill’s thought.” Preface.

SCHILPP, Paul Arthur, ed. *The philosophy of C. D. Broad*. (Library of Living Philosophers.) New York, Tudor, 1959; distributed by Cambridge University Press. xii, 866 p. £5/10/- (U.K.).

Like other volumes in the series, contains an autobiography, expository and critical articles on Broad’s writings, Broad’s reply, and a bibliography. Contributors are: Blanshard, Browning, Ducasse, Flew, Frankena, Hanson, Hare, Hedenius, Kneale, Körner, Kuhn, Marc-Wogau, Mundle, Nelson, Patterson, Price, L. J. Russell, Stace, Turnbull, von Wright and Yolton.

SEELY, Charles S. *Modern materialism; a philosophy of action*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. viii, 83 p. \$2.50.

Rather simple-minded, dogmatic exposition of what the author takes to be the naturalist, humanist, “progressive” position.

Selections from the sacred writings of the Sikhs, translated by Trilochan Singh and others. (Unesco Collection of Representative Works: Indian Series). London, Allen & Unwin, 1960. 288 p. 22s. (U.K.).

SPINK, J. S. *French free-thought from Gassendi to Voltaire*. University of London: Athlone Press, 1960. ix, 345 p. £2/10/- (U.K.).

A historical account, covering both the literature and the philosophy of the period, and dealing, *inter alia*, with the influence of Epicurus, Lucretius and others.

THEMERSON, Stefan. Professor Mmaa's lecture. London, Gaberbocchus Press, 1960. 251 p. 12s. 6d. (U.K.).

A satirical novel about termites, their philosophical views, political organisation, and researches into the bristleless mammal or bald ape, also known as homo. First published in 1953.

THOMAS AQUINAS, Saint. Treatise on separate substances; translated from a newly-established Latin text based on 12 mediaeval manuscripts, with introduction and notes by Rev. F. J. Lescoe. West Hartford, Conn., St. Joseph College, 1959. x, 138 p. \$2.

TUVESON, Ernest Lee. The imagination as a means of grace; Locke and the aesthetics of romanticism. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1960; distributed by Cambridge University Press. vi, 218 p. £2 (U.K.).

Contents that Locke's epistemology changed "the assumptions about the human mind and the nature of character which poets and playwrights had made for thousands of years", and traces the history of this change in the aesthetic theories of Shaftesbury, Addison, Akenside, Alison and others, leading ultimately to the romantic movement.

VALLON, Michel Alexander. An apostle of freedom; life and teachings of Nicolas Berdyaev. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. x, 370 p. \$6.

WINN, Ralph B., ed. A concise dictionary of existentialism. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. ii, 122 p. \$3.75.

Aphorisms from Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, and others arranged alphabetically under subject headings.

WYMAN, Mary A. The lure for feeling in the creative process. New York, Philosophical Library, 1960. xvi, 192 p. \$4.75.

The author extracts from Whitehead a kind of aesthetic mysticism, which, the author thinks, can also be found in some Chinese sages and artists, in Wordsworth and in Walt Whitman.

NOTES AND NEWS

AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHILOSOPHY ANNUAL CONGRESS, 1960

The Congress for 1960 was held in Melbourne between August 22nd and August 26th. The programme was as follows:

Monday, August 22nd:

8 p.m. Presidential Address: Professor J. L. Mackie:
"Space and Time—Absolute or Relative?"

Tuesday, August 23rd:

10 a.m. Mr. J. E. Llewelyn: "On Not Speaking the Same Language".

1.45 p.m. Council Meeting.

4.30 p.m. Annual General Meeting.

7.45 p.m. Professor D. Taylor: "Meaning".

Wednesday, August 24th:

10 a.m. Mr. R. G. Overend: "The Value of Empiricism in Contemporary British Philosophy".

2 p.m. Discussion.

7.45 p.m. Mr. B. Benjamin: "On the Incorrigeability of Avowals of Immediate Experience".

Thursday, August 25th:

10 a.m. Mr. E. Khamara: "Findlay's Philosophical Method".

7.45 p.m. Dr. Mary McCloskey: "First Principles".

Friday, August 26th:

10 a.m. Mr. R. Franklin: "On Dissolving the Problem of Free Will".

2 p.m. Discussion.

